

# Emergency Management: Foundations of Response

Public health emergencies—whether disease outbreaks, intentional threats, or natural or environmental disasters—threaten the health security of the nation. CDC’s emergency management experts work 24/7/365 to ensure the agency can respond to a public health emergency quickly and efficiently.



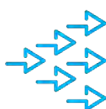
## Why It Matters:

CDC’s Emergency Management Program (EMP) supports rapid, coordinated, and scalable responses to domestic and global public health emergencies. Through the EMP, CDC develops response plans, creates standard operating procedures, and maintains critical infrastructure, such as CDC’s [Emergency Operations Center](#), to meet the needs of each event. CDC maintains readiness by training staff to respond to public health emergencies. The agency also conducts preparedness exercises to continually evaluate and improve its emergency operations capabilities.



### People:

Ensuring the right decision-makers, subject matter experts, and emergency response professionals are preparing for and ready to respond during emergencies.



### Processes:

Using a common framework, response plans, and standard operating procedures to manage emergencies with efficiency and organization, saving weeks of critical time organizing a response.



### Place:

Providing a centralized location, both physically and digitally, to coordinate and share the latest information so that CDC can make timely decisions and share information to keep people safe.

## How Does CDC Respond?

For more than 75 years, CDC has brought together leading scientists to address emerging diseases from around the world, such as smallpox, Ebola Virus Disease, and SARS. Since 2003, CDC’s emergency management expertise has provided the structure and resources so that those scientists can immediately respond to any public health threat. CDC’s team in the EOC is available 24/7/365 to answer and immediately address public health-related questions and concerns. This team fields more than 2,000 requests a year.

During an emergency, CDC helps states, tribes, territories, and local communities keep people safe through funding, technical assistance, and staffing. CDC’s EOC supports day-to-day operations, preparedness and response activities, and information-sharing across the agency and to the public. When a health threat arises, CDC’s highly trained experts and scientists gather in the EOC to analyze incoming information, decide on immediate actions, and plan for future activities. During responses, CDC uses a structured approach (e.g., an Incident Management System) that establishes a chain of command and a common set of objectives, ensuring that everyone is working together to address the public health threat.



## Emergency Management Contributes to Responses by:

- Providing organizational and logistical structure to every phase of a response.
- Centralizing and appropriately scaling CDC response activities.
- Establishing mechanisms for planning and information sharing, inside and outside CDC.
- Deploying experts to support state, tribal, local, and territorial public health departments, foreign ministries of health, and international organizations during public health incidents.
- Coordinating transportation and shipments of supplies and equipment to incident sites.



## The Future of Response:

CDC has decades of experience on the front lines of public health response and emergency management. However, in today's increasingly connected world, the nature of public health emergencies is evolving. The past several years have seen increasingly frequent, overlapping, and complex hazards of all kinds. CDC's prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery activities are evolving to meet the needs of this new threat environment.

CDC programs lead many emergency responses as part of their everyday work protecting the health, safety, and security of Americans. When a public health emergency exceeds the capabilities or resources of the lead program, CDC formally establishes an emergency response to provide enhanced resources and coordination.

Emergency response operations have grown more efficient and effective since 2003. Because of an agency-wide approach to public health emergencies, public health events that at one time would have necessitated a whole-of-agency response can now often be handled as part of normal programmatic operations or with more directed support from the EOC. CDC has also streamlined response operations to provide more centralized support and coordination across multiple, concurrent responses. This support is built to be able to rapidly scale to match the needs to each response. This structure allows each response to be appropriately resourced without undue impact on CDC's other critical core work.

CDC is modernizing the agency's preparedness and response technology to streamline the emergency response systems that support day-to-day operations, response activities, and situational awareness. CDC is creating tools to strategically identify, prepare, and deploy responders ahead of and during public health emergencies. The agency also strengthens its response capacity through a program to continuously train leaders throughout CDC to lead during public health emergencies.

These cutting-edge systems, along with CDC's workforce of trusted responders, allows the agency to establish and sustain public health emergency responses regardless of frequency, size, or complexity.

### Emergency Operations in Action:

Since September 2001, CDC has responded to nearly 70 large-scale public-health emergencies.

CDC has been continuously responding to at least one public health event since December 2011, and is frequently responding to multiple, concurrent public health emergencies.

Recent responses include:

- Infectious diseases, including Ebola Virus Disease, polio, COVID-19, and mpox.
- Natural disasters, including earthquakes, hurricanes, and tsunamis.
- Environmental catastrophes like oil spills and water contamination.

The [EOC Response Timeline](#) showcases CDC's responses to those public health emergencies beginning in 2003.

