

REMS Express

Volume 5, Issue 1, 2014



Principles for Creating a High-Quality Higher ed Emergency Operations Plan

The key principles that campus administrators and first responders follow to direct their emergency planning efforts can help ensure the creation of a high-quality emergency operations plan (EOP) that builds capacity in preparedness and its five mission areas: Prevention, mitigation, protection, response, and recovery. The federal *Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Institutions of Higher Education (IHE Guide)* provides eight fundamental principles for developing a comprehensive EOP that addresses potential threats and hazards to an IHE. This *REMS Express* edition provides a practitioner's perspective on the *IHE Guide's* recommended planning principles and offers practical strategies for implementing them throughout the planning and plan management processes.

Plans Must Be Supported by Senior Leadership

How many times have you observed what appears to be an important initiative or program introduced on your campus without the support of campus senior leaders (e.g., chancellor, president, provost) that is then ignored or garners little support or participation? This appears to be a common occurrence in higher education.

Having early and full support from senior campus leaders captures the attention of other campus departments that are critical to supporting the planning efforts associated with the EOP. If possible, the appropriate senior staff person should energize the planning group's efforts and demonstrate support by attending a kick-off meeting, or by sending a letter or email that emphasizes the importance of the EOP effort.

Continued on next page

QUICK LINKS

[Request a Training](#)

[Request TA](#)

[Take a Webinar](#)

[Find a Resource](#)

[Take an Online Course](#)

[Join the Community of Practice](#)

The REMS TA Center supports schools, school districts, and institutions of higher education in developing and implementing comprehensive emergency operations plans. For additional information about school and higher education emergency management topics, visit the REMS TA Center at <http://rems.ed.gov>.



<http://rems.ed.gov>

Eight Principles Fundamental to Developing a High-Quality EOP



Continued from previous page

Plans Must Be Customized to the Individual Institution Through Assessments

Campus environments are constantly changing. Buildings are constructed or remodeled; academic course offerings are expanded; new land for additional campus space is purchased; and a fluctuating number of new students, faculty, and staff join the campus community. As a result, it is important to implement an ongoing assessment process to ensure effective and strategic emergency planning for your institution.

One way to keep current in this ever-changing environment is to organize an informal monthly or quarterly lunch meeting with appropriate campus departments, first responders, and other critical community partners to share information and to discuss emergency planning updates, resources, and training opportunities. The relationships campus departments and first responders make in this type of setting will be invaluable to the planning process and to implementing the plan during an emergency response.

Plans Must Consider All Threats and Hazards

A variety of threats, hazards, and emergencies can impact our campuses, and no campus is immune to such events. In

fact, several of our nation's IHEs have experienced traumatic events and large-scale emergencies over the past few years. Whether a tornado touchdown, a cybersecurity breach, or an *active shooter situation*, it is important that IHEs research and apply lessons learned from past campus incidents as a way to improve their own emergency management planning. More important, IHEs must prepare for specific threats and hazards that are unique to their region, community, and campus. This process requires a threat and hazard assessment that involves coordinating with local and state emergency management officials. A good source of information on specific hazards is the city- or county-level pre-disaster hazard mitigation plan, which may be available from the community emergency manager. The plan will provide a wealth of historical information and current data on the most critical threats and hazards that IHEs should include in their planning efforts.

Plans Must Provide for the Access and Functional Needs of the Whole IHE Community

The "whole IHE community" comprises students, staff, and visitors, including those with disabilities and others with access and functional needs, those from religiously, racially, and ethnically diverse backgrounds, and people with limited English proficiency.

Continued on next page

Developing an inclusive plan is best accomplished by establishing and maintaining a partnership with the campus student affairs department, which typically provides comprehensive resources to all students. Collaboration also should occur with the campus human resources and/or equal opportunity office as they can provide information to help the planning team construct appropriate emergency plans for individuals with special needs before, during, and after an emergency.

Planners Must Be Mindful of Privacy Rights

In some cases, information must be shared with planning teams, and in others legal restrictions may prevent personal information from being shared. The *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)* is a good resource for understanding the implications of information-sharing in the emergency planning process. In some cases, the *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)* may also apply.

In addition to *FERPA* and *HIPAA*, IHEs are subject to other federal and state civil rights and other laws that restrict information-sharing by IHEs. Those laws prohibit discrimination based on disability (*Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA]* and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973*), race, color, and national origin (*Titles IV and VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*), sex (*Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972* and *Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*), and religion (*Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*). Planning teams must research all applicable local, state, and federal laws to ensure that the privacy rights of students are protected at all times during the planning process.

Planning Must Consider All Settings and All Times

Our nation's campuses are active and bustling with activity year-round. Emergency plans must address the range of circumstances in which campus members live and work: Students and staff study in the library; they work out in the recreation center; they watch sporting events on campus; they ride the campus buses; they visit child care and medical facilities; and they conduct research in labs. Many research campuses have potentially dangerous materials, including radiological materials, and laboratories with numerous chemicals and biological agents. Increasingly, campuses also are expanding their geographic footprint to other locations within their state and developing international study abroad programs. Each of these unique features on a higher education campus requires appropriate planning to build an effective emergency preparedness framework that ensures the safety and security of all who are on its premises.

Planning Must Consider the Individual Preparedness of Students, Faculty, and Staff

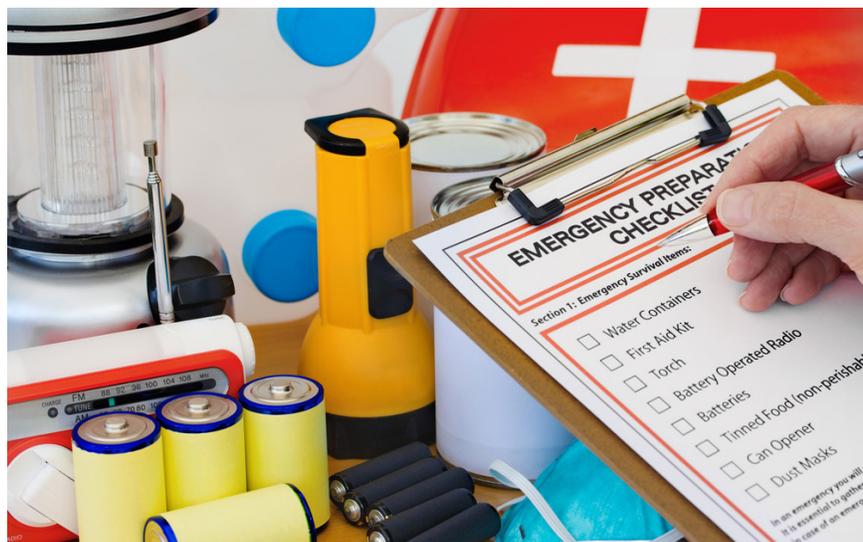
This principle for high-quality EOP development is often not implemented sufficiently in campus communities. Unfortunately, no impenetrable barrier surrounds a campus that can prevent emergencies and criminal acts, and most students arrive on campus with limited life experiences, particularly in dealing with emergencies. Therefore, campus planning efforts should focus on building a partnership between the IHE and the university community. It should emphasize that, while the IHE will provide certain protective provisions (e.g., campus public safety, adequate lighting, and an emergency alert system), the primary responsibility for being prepared for emergencies rests with everyone — the students, faculty members, and staff. Individual preparedness activities for the campus community could include educating its members about the types of emergencies to prepare for on campus, how information will be conveyed during a campus emergency, and how to develop an emergency kit.

Planning Must Meet the Requirements of All Applicable Laws

Although the *IHE Guide* provides a comprehensive approach to emergency planning for IHEs based on an extensive collaboration of federal agencies and lessons learned from actual incidents, IHEs should also adhere to local, state, and federal laws that contain school safety, security, and emergency planning provisions.

Some state or local guidelines require or strongly encourage IHEs to utilize specific planning templates or mandate the inclusion of specific threat or hazard categories in their EOP. For example, the *Clery Act*, an important federal mandate, includes requirements for emergency response and evacuation procedures, as well as timely warning and emergency notifications. The *IHE Guide* contains a special section (“A Closer Look”) that provides an extensive review of the *Clery Act* requirements.

Continued on next page



Plans Must Be Created and Revised Collaboratively

The *IHE Guide* provides a process, format, and content guidance for creating EOPs that are flexible enough for use by all IHE emergency planning teams. IHEs should create broad, inclusive planning teams that are representative of the campus community as well as of its greater community. Effective planning teams collaborate with diverse community representatives to ensure that their knowledge and expertise benefit the planning process, bring initiatives to life, and build capacity in preparedness before, during, and after an emergency. This means involving a variety of departments and functions from across the campus, from the safety and security offices to the academic offices, as well as entities such as student support services and facilities offices. The planning team should also collaborate with community partners, such as law enforcement and fire officials, local emergency managers, emergency medical service providers, and health and mental health agencies.

About the Use of Planning Templates

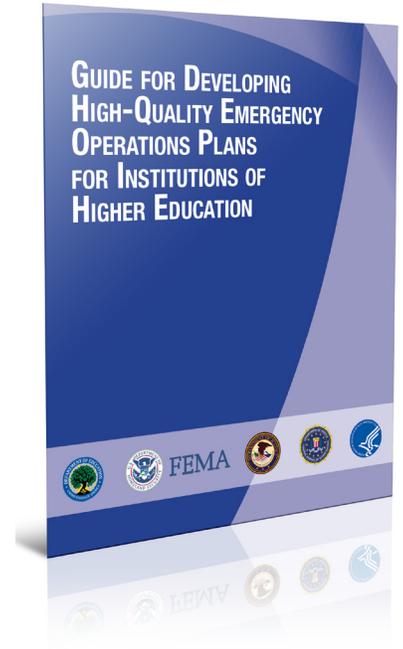
Many IHEs use a template to customize their EOP to the building level. It is important to make sure that using a template in the planning process does not undermine collaboration or omit any of the eight planning principles described above. A template can include mandates and broad language that reflect the IHE setting, but customized

language should be added. Any template should be vetted by the entire planning team, including local first responders and community partners. The use of templates should not replace collaboration, coordination, communication, and planning.

Where to Find Additional Resources

Additional information on emergency planning guidance for IHEs, a downloadable copy of the *IHE Guide*, fact sheets, EOP development tools, and other resources can be found on the REMS TA Center website at <http://rems.ed.gov>.

Click on the picture to access an at-a-glance version of the *IHE Guide*, which provides details about the process and principles, as well as plan content, functional annexes, and threat- and hazard-specific annexes.



Check out the REMS TA Center's Website and Resources at <http://rems.ed.gov>

Community of Practice
Contribute and Connect with Others in the Field

State Emergency Management Resources
Access Information From Your State Related to School and Higher ed Safety

Online Courses
Learn the Basics of EOP Development at Your Own Pace

Interactive Forms
Request Technical Assistance or Submit a Tool Using Web-based Forms

EOP Assess Tool
Assess Your Understanding of High Quality EOP Development