

## RELATED TERMS

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## Lessons Learned Information Sharing

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# LESSON LEARNED

## Continuity of School Operations: Identifying and Training Substitute Personnel for Incident Command Roles

### SUMMARY

School administrators should consider identifying and training staff members to serve as substitutes for primary assignees to incident command system (ICS) positions. These staff members can help ensure continuity of operations during an incident at a school.

### DESCRIPTION

On May 31, 2006, the University of Washington in Seattle held a tabletop exercise simulating the effect of a worldwide pandemic influenza outbreak on its Seattle, Bothell, and Tacoma campuses. The purpose of the exercise was to test the adequacy of the university's emergency response and management plan (ERMP) during all phases of a pandemic disease outbreak. The exercise included 56 participants, representing University of Washington administrators, unit leaders, and departments as well as the local and state emergency management community.

Exercise evaluators raised concerns that during a pandemic influenza outbreak school staff members assigned to the university's emergency operations center may be unable to fulfill their assigned ICS roles. Although the university's ERMP identified two substitutes for each ICS role, emergency planners questioned whether this would be sufficient for a large-scale disaster.

School administrators should consider identifying and training several alternative staff members to serve as substitutes for primary assignees to ICS positions. The assignment of trained alternatives will help ensure continuity of operations if some or all primary assignees are unable to fulfill their duties during an incident at a school.

There is no standard terminology for referring to a school's emergency plan. Although the University of Washington refers to its plan as an ERMP, many other jurisdictions refer to their plans as emergency management plans.

For additional information on planning for pandemic influenza in schools, please also refer to the Department of Education's [Pandemic Flu: A Planning Guide for Educators](#).

For additional information on continuity of operations plans, please also refer to the *Lessons Learned Information Sharing Best Practice* series document, [State and Local Government Continuity of Operations Planning: Overview](#).

### CITATION

Charvat, Steven. Emergency Management Director, University of Washington. Interview with *Lessons Learned Information Sharing*, 21 Dec 2006.

University of Washington. *After-Action Report: University of Washington, Disaster Resistant University, Pandemic Influenza Functional Tabletop Exercise*. 01 Jun 2006.  
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