Interim Guidance on Transition of Level 1 Incident Support Responsibilities

I. Purpose

A. The purpose of this document is to establish policy and procedures for transitioning incident support responsibilities from the Regional Response Coordination Staff (RRCS) to the National Response Coordination Staff (NRCS) when directed during a Level 1 incident and in support of a National Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) and the Unified Coordination Group (UCG). This Directive also denotes the decision points for the full transition of operations to the IMAT and UCG and potential return of incident support functions to Regional control when conditions warrant. This process will help to facilitate the movement of regional personnel into their assigned incident management positions as quickly as possible to meet incident needs following a Level 1 incident.

B. Upon revision of the National Incident Support Manual (NISM) and Regional Incident Support Manual (RISM), this policy will be incorporated into those documents and superseded as necessary.

II. Scope

This Directive applies to all FEMA Regions, Headquarters, IMATs, and members of the RRCS and NRCS that are participating in response activities.

III. Supersession

Memorandum, signed by the Assistant Administrator for Response, dated December, 2011 – *Transition of Level 1 Incident Support Responsibilities – Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) to National Response Coordination Center (NRCC)*

IV. Definitions

A. **Critical Transition Tasks:** Tasks integral to the transition of incident support responsibilities from the RRCS to the NRCS.

B. **Incident Support**: The coordination of Federal resources to support emergency response, recovery, and mitigation.

V. Policy

A. When the FEMA Administrator or delegated authority designates an incident as Level 1 or expects an incident to be of such significance to meet the requirements of a Level 1 incident, as defined by the Incident Management and Support Keystone, FEMA will deploy a National IMAT to the impacted area, as outlined in FEMA Directive 010-7 on the IMAT Program. The Director of Disaster Operations (DDO) may also direct that incident support responsibilities be transitioned from the RRCS to the NRCS to effectively facilitate the deployment, prioritization, adjudication, and allocation of national resources and assets at the national level, to create unity of command, and to allow FEMA Regions to more effectively apply regional resources to incident management needs.

B. Transition of incident support responsibilities from the RRCS to the NRCS will be initiated once the IMAT is operational, as determined by the National IMAT Leader. In the event of a no-notice Level 1 incident (natural or man-made), the DDO may direct, or the RA may request, that the NRCS assume immediate control of incident support to enable unity of command and a single point of effort for incident support so that the Region can deploy personnel resources to the field immediately.

C. The NRCS, RRCSs, IMATs, and UCGs will perform all functions in coordination with responsibilities outlined in the NISM, RISM, and FEMA Directive 010-7 - IMAT Program, respectively.

VI. Process for Transition (*See* Appendix I)

1. **Part 1: Leadership Coordination Call**

   When an incident has or is likely to have catastrophic impacts to the United States or its territories, the Operations Division Director will direct the FEMA Operations Center (FOC) to initiate a FEMA Leadership Teleconference to provide a Senior Executive Briefing, identify appropriate response actions, and begin to develop a unified concept of operations. This teleconference will include the FEMA Administrator, DDO, and Regional Administrator (RA) for the impacted region, as well as applicable agency leadership.

   During this call, the FEMA Administrator, DDO, and RA should make or confirm[1] decisions on the following: (1) initial designation or expected designation of disaster level, (2) deployment of a National IMAT, (3) activation of the NRCS, (4) requirements for the initial push package, (5) designation of a Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO), and (6) direction to transition incident support operations from the RRCS to the NRCS.

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[1] In limited circumstances where major catastrophic impacts are known, the National Watch Center (NWC) Director or Senior Watch Officer may direct the FOC to automatically alert or activate the NRCS and deploy the IMATs and/or Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) System, followed-up with a written Operations Order signed by the DDO or their designee.

2. **Part 2: Communication of Transition**

Following the leadership call, if the determination has been made to transition incident support responsibilities from the RRCS to the NRCS, the DDO or assigned designee will sign an operations order to begin the transition process outlined below. This decision should be made as soon as feasible based on the situation.

Issuance of this operations order will be communicated to members of the RRCS, NRCS, Regional and National IMATs, Regional and National Emergency Support Function (ESF) representatives, and Other State and Federal Agencies, as necessary.

3. **Part 3: Implementation of Transition**

Official transition of responsibilities from the RRCS to the NRCS will be initiated through a coordination call between the Chief of the RRCS, Chief of the NRCS, and IMAT Leader and/or FCO, as well as supporting section chiefs and/or branch directors, as appropriate. During this call, the Chief of the NRCS should confirm that the NRCS is ready to take over federal incident support operations and establish a timeline and begin the transition.

i. **Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) / Unified Coordination Group (UCG)**

Upon arrival at the deployed location, the IMAT will coordinate the establishment of a UCG and integrate deployed staff into the UCG. This UCG will begin execution of federal operations in furtherance of the applicable regional plan(s).

During the transition, the IMAT/UCG should maintain communications with both the NRCS and RRCS, so long as they are activated, to ensure coordination between incident management and incident support.

When an incident occurs over a widespread geographical area where multiple National and/or Regional IMATs are deployed, these responsibilities apply equally to all National IMATs and the NRCS and/or RRCS should ensure coordination and communication with all teams in the field.

ii. **Regional Response Coordination Staff (RRCS)**

If activated, the RRCS will maintain federal incident support operations and coordinate directly with the State until a National IMAT is deployed and a UCG has been established in each affected State within the affected region and/or the incident support responsibilities have been fully transitioned to RRCS counterparts in the NRCS.

After receiving the order to transition, the RRCS should coordinate with counterparts in the NRCS to transition ongoing and impending incident support actions to be continued by the appropriate NRCS section. To help facilitate the transition, the RRCS should ensure that the NRCS has access to regional guides, plans, procedures, and background material, such as state profiles.

The RRCS should coordinate with Regional ESF partners to ensure receipt of notice to transition and determine if there are any issues that may cause delay in transition of these capabilities. The RRCS should also notify their State counterparts to ensure situational awareness is maintained during and after the transition and that contact information is provided to the NRCS and IMAT/UCG Staff.

The Region should designate personnel that are available either as direct liaisons to travel to the NRCC or as Points of Contact (POCs) to be available to capture Regional or State specific information and context at the national level. In the event of a no-notice incident, if the RRCS does not activate and incident support is immediately assumed by the NRCS, the same POCs and/or liaisons should be available to ensure information sharing needs are met.

When an incident occurs over a widespread geographical area and/or multiple states within a region, the RRCS will maintain federal incident support as well as incident management operations for other affected states within the region.

iii. **National Response Coordination Staff (NRCS)**

When designated, the NRCS will assume control for federal incident support operations. Section chiefs and group supervisors should coordinate directly with counterparts in the RRCS to transition ongoing and future activities from the RRCS to the NRCS.

The NRCS should coordinate with ESFs, Other Federal Agencies (OFAs), and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) at the national level to ensure transition of activities from these agencies' regional and/or field counterparts to NRCS representatives and determine if there are any issues that may cause delay in transition of these capabilities.

4. **Part 4: Completion of Transition for Incident Support and Mobilization of Regional Employees to the Field**

When the Chief of the NRCS or DDO is satisfied that a sufficient number of critical transition tasks have been completed, formal completion of the transition will be confirmed during the leadership video teleconference (VTC) and/or through written communication to the RA, RRCS, and NRCS, as well as any activated ESFs and OFAs. The transition should occur within one operational period, after it is initiated, but may vary depending on the situation. Tracking of all tasks associated with the transition will be maintained in the WebEOC Incident Transition Checklist. This board will be visible by all positions, but may be updated only by section chiefs and/or group supervisors in the RRCS, NRCS, and on the National IMAT.

Upon completion of the transition from the RRCS to the NRCS, the RRCS will stand down federal incident support operations in support of the designated incident. If directed by the Deployment Tracking System (DTS), Regional employees with Incident Management titles will deploy as outlined by FEMA Directive 010-8, Incident Workforce Deployment Directive, or to the NRCC as needed.

5. **Part 5: De-activation of NRCS, full transition to the IMAT/UCG Staff and/or back to the Region**

When determined by the DDO, in coordination with the FCO/UCG Staff, that national level incident support is no longer required, the NRCS will be de-activated through a signed Operations Order and all activities will be assumed by incident management staff in the field and/or as appropriate transitioned back to the RRCS counterpart for continued tracking or close-out.

6. **Timeline**

Part	Determining Factor for Start	Action
Part 1	National Watch Center (NWC) Notice of Major Incident	o Preliminary leadership coordination call to determine initial assignment of responsibilities o Designation of incident and activation level, deployment of National IMAT, initial push of resources/Mission Assignments
Part 2	Leadership Decision to Transition Incident Support	o Operations order signed/released to direct the transition o Conference Call between RRCS Chief, NRCS Chief, IMAT Leader/FCO
Part 3	NRCS Operational/Ready to Assume Incident Support Operations	o Coordination between RRCS and NRCS Counterparts o Coordination with IMAT/UCG (operational by +12 hours) o Deployment of Regional personnel to their Incident Management titles, as appropriate o Checklist completion communicated to section chiefs
Part 4	Chief of NRCS Determines Completion of Sufficient Transition Tasks	o Confirm completion in WebEOC significant events board; SAS Chief will communicate completion of transition to NRCS/RRCS o RRCS stands down incident support operations for the Level 1 Incident o NRCS maintains incident support operations in support of the IMAT/UCG
Part 5	Requirements for Incident Support No Longer Require NRCS Activation	o Ops Order signed de-activating the NRCS and standing down incident support operations in the NRCC

VII. Critical Tasks for Transition of Incident Support Operations

Completion of the following tasks and responsibilities will verify the status of the transition and help to inform leadership decision-making. The status of each task should be updated in the WebEOC board for the transition.

A. Regional Administrator

1. Participate in preliminary leadership coordination call with the FEMA Administrator and DDO.
2. Participate in the development of strategic direction, priorities, goals, and objectives, and ensure FEMA's ability to execute in coordination with the IMAT Lead/FCO, FEMA Administrator, and DDO.
3. Deploy designated Regional personnel to act as POCs and/or deploy to the NRCC as liaisons in support of incident support operations as required.

B. Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC)

1. Chief of the Regional Response Coordination (Chief of the RRCS)

i. Participate in transition coordination call with the Chief of the NRCS and applicable NRCS/RRCS section chiefs and group supervisors.
ii. Confirm receipt of notice to transfer for all RRCS and begin transfer of incident support operations to the NRCS, when Chief of the NRCS confirms readiness to accept.
iii. Contact the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) to determine initial Federal response requirements and confirm execution of the deliberate plan.
iv. Ensure section chiefs prepare the following information for transfer: (1) Contact rosters (Joint Field Office, IMAT, Region, LNOs, etc.), (2) pending Requests for Information (RFIs), (3) planning documents, (4) pending resource requests, and (5) outstanding mission assignments, 40-1s or other remaining issues for resolution.

2. Regional Response Coordination Staff (RRCS)

i. Coordinate with NRCS counterparts for transition.
ii. Confirm with Regional ESFs and State counterparts receipt of notice to transition and provide updated contact information for the NRCS and IMAT/UCG.
iii. Coordinate the transition of RRCS ESFs, OFA, and NGO representatives to the field and/or to their NRCS counterparts.
iv. Coordinate with the NRCS Planning Support Section (PSS) and IMAT Planning Section on deliberate plan Concept of Operations (CONOPS) and current objectives as outlined in the Regional Support Plan (RSP), including identified priorities and tasks. Ensure inclusion of RRCS functions and regional products that should be transferred to the NRCS and/or IMAT/UCG.
v. Transfer responsibility for movement of teams and resources to the NRCS Resources Support Section (RSS) and IMAT Logistics Section, as appropriate.
vi. Complete, maintain, and/or transition responsibility for any open Mission Assignments, resource requests, and orders that were initiated prior to the transition to the NRCS, as appropriate. When necessary, determine staff requirements to maintain incident support operations for other impacted states within the region.

C. Director of Disaster Operations (DDO)

1. Participate in preliminary leadership coordination call with FEMA Administrator and RA(s).

2. Sign and release Operations Order to initiate the transition of incident support responsibilities and, if not previously done, deploy the National IMAT.
3. Maintain communication with the Chief of the NRCS, RA, FEMA Administrator, and IMAT Lead/FCO throughout the transition to ensure coordination of priorities and operations.

D. National Response Coordination Center (NRCC)

1. Chief of the National Response Coordination Staff (Chief of the NRCS)

   i. Hold conference call with the Chief of the RRCS and IMAT Leader/FCO to initiate transition.

   ii. Confirm that IMAT is operational and has begun to establish the UCG; verify availability of contact information (Fact Sheet, Incident Action Plan, etc.).

   iii. Direct Situational Awareness, Planning, and Resources Support section chiefs to initiate respective transition actions; determine if any issues may require a delay in transfer.

   iv. Confirm that activated ESFs have received orders to transition; determine if any issues may cause a delay in transfer of ESF functions.

   v. Verify with NRCS section chiefs that all tasks for transition have been completed; direct SAS Chief to notify NRCS that transition is complete.

   vi. Following transition, coordinate all response activities directly with the applicable IMAT Leader/FCO.

2. Resource Support Section (RSS)

   i. Resource Support Section Chief (RSSC)
      a. Direct all group supervisors, branch directors, and unit leads within RSS to initiate transfer with RRCS counterparts.
      b. Report to the Chief of the NRCS when RSS transitions actions are complete.

   ii. Resource Capability Branch Director and Group Supervisors for Operations Support Group, Infra-Structure Assets Group, Individual Assistance Group & Emergency Services Group

      a. Communicate with RRCS Resource Support section chief (RSSC) and group supervisors in the RRCS to coordinate transfer, including: ensuring contact rosters on hand for Joint Field Office (JFO), IMAT, Region, LNOs, and other elements; pending resource requests; and identification of execution checklist being used.

      b. Branch and Group personnel should initiate contact with their RRCS RSS counterparts to transition all RRCS RSS recently completed, on-going, and future (*Resource Request Form (RRF) received*) resourcing action to the NRCS RSS.

      c. For "**completed**" Resourcing Requirements:
         i. Crosscheck and verify that all WebEOC entries for each RRF have been completed, to include "Overall Status" for the RRF annotated in WebEOC Tracker as "completed."

    ii. If "Overall Status" is not annotated as completed, the sourcing RRCS group supervisor must determine if the resource requirement was met and update the WebEOC Tracker.

d. For "**in-process**" resource requirements, to include those in the adjudication, sourcing, funding or procurement phases:
    i. The sourcing RRCS group supervisor should determine the current status of the requirement and ensure the comments section of the WebEOC RRF Tracker accurately reflects current status.
    ii. Determine which group, or unit, the RRF is assigned to. Ensure current status, including actions taken, POC and other information relevant to processing the RRF is updated in the tracker comments section.
    iii. Ensure the on-going RRF is reassigned to the NRCS RSS Resource Coordination Branch Director (RCBD).
    iv. Determine the most effective means to complete processing of the RRF. If the transfer of the RRF to the NRCS would substantially delay processing of the requirement, this may require the sourcing RRCS to complete the sourcing process.

e. For "**future**" resource requirements, for which an RRF has been received, but for which the adjudication, sourcing, funding or procurement phases have not begun:
    i. The NRCS and RRCS RCBDs should verify that the RRF contains all necessary information required to begin the adjudication and sourcing process, to include state signature for requirements with a cost share.

f. Upon completion of all RSS transition actions, each RSS group supervisor will report completion to the RCBD. Once all RSS group supervisors have reported completion, the RCBD will report to the RSSC.

iii. Comptroller, Order Processing Group (COPG) (*Finance, Mission Assignments and Acquisition*)

a. Coordinate the initial and future funding requirements, review and verify information in ECAP's, NEMIS, WebEOC, and IFMIS.
b. Ensure that the communication occurs to hand off the travel requirements from the RRCS to the NRCS comptroller staff.
c. Finalize existing requests and process actions in all systems.

iv. Contracting and Acquisition Unit Leader (CAUL)

a. Identify outstanding 40-1s in the system of record (i.e. eCAPS, WebEOC)
b. Coordinate with the regional Contracting Officer the disposition of each action
c. For those actions that remain with the affected Contracting Officer, report the status of those actions through completion

v. Mission Assignment Unit Leader (MAUL)

a. For "**completed**" Mission Assignments, cross-walk in eCAPS and WebEOC to verify all required actions are completed. (**Note:** *RRCS and NRCS MAULs must ensure mission assignment completion status is clearly documented*).

b. For "**in-process**" mission assignments, to include those in the funding or approval phases, the RRCS and NRCS MAULs should determine the current status of the MA and reroute unprocessed mission assignments in eCAPS and WebEOC to the NRCS-MAUL.[2]

vi. Personnel/Human Resources

a. For completed DTS Requests, cross-walk DTS and verify all required actions are completed and updated on the Resource Tracker in WebEOC.

b. For in process Personnel Requests, determine the current status and reroute unprocessed requests to the HR Specialist.

vii. Ordering/Logistics

a. For completed LCMS requests, cross-walk in LSCMS to verify all required actions are completed and updated on the Resource Tracker in WebEOC.

b. For in process ordering request, determine the current status and reroute unprocessed requests to the Ordering Specialist.

3. Situational Awareness Section (SAS)

i. Situational Awareness Section Chief (SASC)

a. Immediately upon notification of transition, the NRCS and RRCS SASCs advise SA section personnel that transfer is underway.

b. Conducts initial coordination call between NRCS and RRCS SA staff (section chief and unit leads) to receive a situation overview/update, and to identify and transition key collection, analysis, and dissemination activities and outstanding issues.

c. Transfers products and/or information, including:

1. All current and past RRCS products and reports, including, published Regional Support Plans, SITREPS, presentations, briefings, and analysis/white papers and other contributions to the Common Operating Picture;

2. Current RAs Critical Information Requirements (CIRs) and Essential Elements Of Information (EEIs);

3. Current contact roster on hand (Initial Operating Facility (IOF)/JFO, IMAT, Region, LNOs);

4. Regional ESFs;

5. Updated status on all Requests for Information (RFIs);

6. Log-in information for state and Tribal partner common operating picture platforms (i.e. WebEOC, SharePoint, etc.), if available; and

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[2] *Rerouted mission assignments should be prioritized for completion based on either deliberate planning guidance and/or incident manager priorities*

7. Regional information collection plan and sources utilized for information collection at the Regional level.

d. Posts NRCS SA contact information on RRCS SA email "out of office" messages.
e. Facilitates the deployment of an RRCS SA LNO to the NRCC as practicable or arrange for reach back to Regional situational awareness staff to provide technical assistance and continuity in SA methods, product development and reporting activities in the impacted area.
f. Monitor and report on status of NRCS and RRCS transition actions.
g. Following completion of SA transfer activities, the SA Chiefs will notify the NRCS Chief/Deputy Chief and RRCS Chief/Deputy Chief.
h. Once confirmed by the DDO or Chief of the NRCS that the transition is complete, send an email notification to NRCS, NWC, RRCS personnel, and Regional Watch/Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS) Operations Centers, and post SA Transition completion to NRCC/Regional Significant Events board.
i. Notify the IMAT/UCG Planning section chief and Situation Unit Leader of the confirmed transition and will make direct contact to establish a coordinated operations tempo and reporting deadline.

ii. Information Collection Unit

a. Ensure relay of the Regional Information Collection Plan (ICP)
b. Communicate additional/emerging CIRs or emerging Essential Elements of Information to identify critical open source information or media considerations.
c. Update the NRCS ICP based on RRCS input.
d. RRCS SAS-ICU communicates RFIs to NRCS SAS for receipt, action, and tracking.

iii. Information Analysis Unit

a. Relay regionally developed hazard-specific analytical assessments of damage or potential damage from FEMA, OFAs, universities, and other sources.
b. Provide contacts and support materials for regionally utilized sources of technical expertise and specialized information.

iv. Documentation Unit

a. Coordinate transmittal and access to regionally developed incident support reports and briefings developed in support of the incident.
b. Collect and share published reports in single, comprehensive WebEOC event.
c. Coordinate on the maintenance of historical files and records.

v. Geospatial Information System and Technical Group

a. Coordinate access to technical, modeling, and mapping data and resources required to support the incident and the availability of all relevant data used to support the production of map products, statistical data for reports, and/or analysis.

      b. Share collected spatial data and analysis.

      c. Provide an overview and access to regional acquisition, exploitation, and dissemination of remote sensing data.

vi. Emergency Support Function 15/External Affairs Unit

      a. Coordinate the transfer of current public messaging activities.

      b. Relay through WebEOC, Regionally developed developing press releases, background information, fact sheets, social media, talking points, congressional briefings, and other external affairs products.

vii. Risk Analysis Unit

      a. Transfer all current and historical files and products to the NRCS.

      b. Provide current subject matter experts contact information and/or sources utilized for the incident.

4. Planning Support Section (PSS)

    i. Coordinate with Regional Planning counterparts to coordinate transfer, including: status of ongoing planning efforts (regional support, functional, etc.), identification of deliberate plan being applied, and what phase in the plan they have reached.

    ii. Coordinate with Regional Planning counterparts to modify applicable catastrophic plan concept of operations to the specific incident through crisis action planning, including the development of a transportation and logistics strategy to support IMAT operations.

    iii. Coordinate development of the National Support Plan (NSP) with the RSP.

    iv. Establish communication with the IMAT/UCG Planning Section to set operational tempo for development of the NSP and Incident Action Plans (IAP).

    v. Ensure remaining incident planning requirements for response resources, services, and program/policy decisions are transferred to the NRCS Planning Section from the RRCS, as appropriate.

    vi. The NRCS PSS section chief will report to the NRCS Chief when PSS actions are complete.

E. National Incident Management Assistance Team (National IMAT)/Unified Coordination Group Staff (UCGS)

1. Team Lead and/or Federal Coordinating Officer

    i. Participate in preliminary leadership coordination call with FEMA Administrator, RA(s), and DDO, when possible.

    ii. Notify the DDO and NRCS/RRCS Chiefs when team is on-site and operational.

    iii. Integrate already deployed staff, including Regional IMATs, into UCG operations.

    iv. Coordinate with the State Coordinating Officer on the operational approach for managing the declaration activities, such as establishing a JFO.
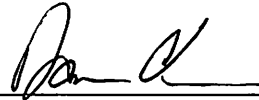
v. Where possible, develop a projected timeline for the operation and transition back to Region.

2. **Logistics**

   i. Communicate with RRCS and NRCS RSS to determine what resources are currently available and what resources are inbound to the field.
   ii. Conduct an initial assessment of logistical requirements for the incident.
   iii. Plan and implement the Logistics Section organization.

3. **Operations**
   i. Coordinate with RRCS and NRCS transition to develop common operating picture, what plans are being used, and gain current situational awareness.

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