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Washington, DC 20004



**FEMA**

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Jeremy Greenberg  
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Response Directorate

FROM: John Rabin   
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SUBJECT: Interim Guidance -- National Watch Center (NWC)  
Enhanced Watch and National Response Coordination  
Center (NRCC) Operational Statuses

#### **Overview**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide interim guidance on NWC and NRCC operational statuses, to include differences, interdependencies, and triggers. This memorandum is effective until applicable policy and doctrine are updated.

#### **NWC**

The National Watch Center is FEMA's 24/7 uninterrupted situational awareness center for national-level, all-hazards incident identification, analysis, and reporting that may require a coordinated federal response. The NWC gains, maintains, and conveys shared situational understanding aimed at supporting effective national decision making at all levels.

#### **NRCC**

The NRCC is the primary operations management center and focal point for national resource coordination to support the efforts of regional and field components. The National Response Coordination Staff (NRCS), comprised of personnel from FEMA, other Federal agencies (OFA) and non-governmental organizations (NGO), provides national-level emergency management by coordination and integrating resources, policy guidance, situational awareness to support affected region(s). When activated, the NRCC, through the NRCS, is the center of gravity for event and incident support decision making at the Federal level.

#### **National Support Activities**

Depending on the scale and complexity of an event or incident, FEMA leads

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coordination with the interagency and other partners for some or all national support activities:

1. Establish unified coordination.
2. Gain, maintain, and communicate situational awareness.
3. Deliver resources (e.g., people, commodities, equipment, and finances).
4. Conduct incident planning.
5. Coordinate public messaging and warning.

### Activations

The NRCC, through the National Response Coordination Branch (NRCB),<sup>1</sup> and the NWC conduct steady state coordination for all matters that can be handled with existing staffing. When an event or incident is possible or expected to trigger enhanced coordination activities, Office of Response and Recovery (ORR) leadership may decide to increase the operational status of the NWC or NRCC. The subsequent sections explain when the Enhanced Watch and NRCC may activate to perform national support activities. Any change in operational status for the NWC and/or NRCC requires an Operations Order (OPORD).<sup>2</sup>

### Enhanced Watch

ORR leadership may activate the Enhanced Watch for up to 24/7 operations when an event or incident requires, or is expected to require, coordination and situational awareness activities that exceed the steady state capabilities of the NWC. Staffing comprises NWC watch officers and analysts and select FEMA program office personnel with germane expertise. Activation triggers may include National Special Security Events (NSSE) or incidents, potential or actual, requiring enhanced monitoring and additional reporting. When the Enhanced Watch is activated, the FEMA Daily Operations Briefing and twice-daily National Situation Report (NSR)<sup>3</sup> include event- or incident-specific reporting, and augmented with Spot Reports (SPOTREP) as needed to keep decision makers apprised of significant situation developments.

### NRCC

If FEMA is required to perform three or more national support activities, ORR leadership may consider activating the NRCC to one of three levels:

- **Level 3:** At this level, the NRCS is conducting Limited National Coordination for preparatory and sustained activities, such as consequence management

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<sup>1</sup> The NRCB is the steady state branch in the Response Operations Division responsible for readying incident support cadres, programs, and facilities to support jurisdictions, through the FEMA Regions, before, during, and after disasters.

<sup>2</sup> The Assistant Administrator for Response has delegated authority to issue OPORDs by the NWC, when directed by the FEMA Operations Division Director, or their designee.

<sup>3</sup> The NSR is published twice daily whether the NWC is operating in steady state or EW.

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planning, resource movements using non-program funding, and incident stabilization activities. NRCC section chiefs set work schedules for activated personnel based on operational requirements. Staffing likely is limited to FEMA NRCS Incident Support (IS) personnel. Activation triggers may include tropical cyclones nearing U.S. interests, significant natural disaster with widespread impacts, or sustained disaster activities.

ORR leadership may decide to activate both the Enhanced Watch and NRCC to Level 3. In this instance, the NWC maintains responsibility for situational awareness, to include publication of recurring reports (e.g., the FEMA Daily Operations Briefing and NSR) and Requests for Information (RFI) management, and the NRCC maintains responsibility for resource movements and planning activities. This combination is advantageous if ORR leadership seeks to maintain augmented 24/7 readiness without triggering a higher NRCC activation level.

- **Level 2:** At this level, the NRCS is conducting Moderate National Coordination, performing up to five national support activities, supporting event or incident response and recovery, and typically working 12-hour day shift schedules. Staffing comprises NRCS IS personnel. Activation triggers may include events or incidents with anticipated or actual physical consequences generating Stafford Act declarations. When activated to Level 2, the development and/or delivery of Senior Leadership Briefs (SLB), National Support Plans (NSP), Interagency video teleconferences (VTC),<sup>4</sup> and Disaster Operations Executive Sync (DOES) conference calls will be based on operational requirements.
- **Level 1:** At this level, the NRCS is conducting Significant National Coordination, performing up to five national support activities, supporting event or incident response and recovery, and typically working 24/7 schedules. Staffing comprises NRCS IS personnel. Activation triggers may include events or incidents with anticipated or actual physical consequences generating Stafford Act declarations. When activated to Level 1, the development and/or delivery of SLBs, NSPs, Interagency VTCs, and DOES conference calls will be based on operational requirements.

**Contact Information**

Please direct questions pertaining to the NWC or Enhanced Watch to [FEMA-NWC@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-NWC@fema.dhs.gov), and questions pertaining to the NRCC to [NRCCMain@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:NRCCMain@fema.dhs.gov).

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<sup>4</sup> The NWC establishes the connection, coordinates the agenda, distributes the calendar invitation, and facilitates the Interagency VTC.