Unit 5: Situational Awareness and Common Operating Picture
Unit 5 Objectives

- Define situational awareness (SA) and common operating picture (COP).
- Explain how situational awareness and common operating picture contribute to effective incident management, EOC operations, and decisionmaking.
- Identify methods to achieve situational awareness and common operating picture.
Video: Viewpoints From the Field

Click image to play video.
Common Points of EOC Failure

- Communications Capability
- Resource Management
- Depth of the EOC Organization
- Training and Exercising
- Situational Awareness and Common Operating Picture
Review: Situational Awareness

“The ability to identify, process, and comprehend the critical information about an incident. More simply, it is knowing what is going on around you. Situational Awareness requires continuous monitoring of relevant sources of information regarding actual incidents and developing hazards.”

- National Response Framework (NRF)
Sources of Situational Awareness

Sources of situational awareness in early stages of EOC activation:

- First responders and government agencies
- Dispatch Centers (911)
- Citizens
- Media
- Nongovernmental organizations

Who else contributes to situational awareness?
Data Collection and Management

Effective data collection and management is critical to situational awareness and must include:

- Agreement on which data elements are critical.
- Reliable systems for transmission and display of situational awareness components.
Review: Common Operating Picture

A common operating picture:

- Means that personnel from all organizations at all locations have the same information.
- Is based on situational awareness of:
  - Current status and evolving situation.
  - Needed resources.
  - Availability and location of resources.
Visualizing SA and COP

EOC

Individual EOC SA developed for the State

Evaluation process consideration:
1. Organizational structure
2. Data filtering process
3. Developing an informational picture
4. Pushing out a picture
5. Continued SA monitoring
6. Defining a planning process for SA and COP

Managing SA to develop a COP through information management & relationships

COP/SA from incident(s)

Impacted communities
EOC Situation Reports

Standardized reports documenting the:

- Level of activation
- Operational status
- Ongoing issues
- Requests or needs
- Anticipated issues and needs

EOC SitReps = Situational Awareness
COP: Elements

A common operating picture includes:

- Data
- Information
- Intelligence

A common operating picture enables effective, consistent, coordinated, and timely decisionmaking.
COP: Data

Sources of information for a common operating picture include:

- 911 calls
- Social media
- Eyewitness reports
- Radio communications among responders
- Weather reports
COP: Information

Information is combined, organized, and verified to develop a picture of what is happening.

As more data are added, the COP becomes clearer.
COP: Intelligence

Intelligence results from analyzing the information and adding findings, conclusions, and recommendations for action.
Activity: COP (1 of 3)

Scenario:
- Six city EOCs are activated to coordinate their communities’ disaster response/recovery, requiring extensive transportation and sheltering.
- Three of the City EOCs are so busy that they do not:
  - Submit a SitRep to their coordinating county.
  - Participate in a conference call coordination briefing.
  - Have communications with their field components or the county.
Activity: COP (2 of 3)

Scenario (Continued):

- The county develops their Incident Action Plan for coordination based upon the information provided by the six city EOCs.
- Priorities and objectives are based on the information received from the cities.
- Three cities do not have communication capabilities and cannot share their situational awareness.
Activity: COP (3 of 3)

Instructions: Working in small groups, answer the following questions:

- Is there a common operating picture for the county? Why or why not?
- Does the county have accurate situational awareness to provide and report to the State? Why or why not?
- What does the group recommend (from the viewpoint of the county EOC) as an action item to resolve the problem of cities not providing situational awareness?
- Be prepared to share your work in 15 minutes.
Questions to Ask Yourself

When developing a common operating picture, ask yourself:

- Is the information relevant and timely?
- Is the development of an action plan based on the COP necessary?
- Does the information help in maintaining situational awareness for others?
COP: A Powerful Leadership Tool

A formally established and well-managed common operating picture is a powerful leadership tool that:

- Facilitates collective efforts.
- Increases collaboration.
- Collects and disseminates pertinent and up-to-date information.
Importance of a COP

- Improves incident safety.
- Provides the basis for informed predictions and proactive response.
- Allows effective, consistent, and timely tactical and strategic decisions.
- Supports a coordinated response among all response participants.
- Helps ensure consistency of situational awareness.
Social Media Tools for SA and COP

- Gather information and first-hand accounts of incident impacts.
- Capture citizen reactions.
- Distribute emergency information.
- Map incident visualization.
- Match available resources and information to identified needs.
Compare and Contrast

**Common Operating Picture**
- Goal focused/driven
- Focused on the big picture
- A mental model
- Individual or team/shared concept

**Situational Awareness**
- Data focused/driven
- Built from the bottom-up
- A functional model
- Team or shared concept
Final Thoughts

Situational awareness and common operating picture:

- Begin with relationships.
- Require policy and procedures to facilitate the processes.

Available Training:
EMI L948: Situational Awareness and Common Operating Picture Course
Unit 5 Summary

We discussed:

- Situational awareness and common operating picture.
- How situational awareness and common operating picture contribute to effective incident management, EOC operations, and decisionmaking.
- Methods to achieve situational awareness and common operating picture.