Continuity of Operations Plan

Chattanooga-Hamilton County/North Georgia Transportation Planning Organization
COOP: Procedures to ensure the continuity of essential functions in an emergency
Assessing the Vulnerability of Tennessee Transportation Assets to Extreme Weather

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TDOT

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Why a COOP?

Addressing security of the transportation system

Recommendation from FHWA

RPA: Records retention
Resources

COOP template  (sent to MPOs 02/16)
FEMA
State and local emergency management agencies
Answer the question, "Why are we the ones to solve the problem we identified?"

Hamilton County: Emergency Services

Hamilton County Health Department: Emergency Preparedness and Planning

City of Chattanooga: IT, Finance, Legal

Chattanooga-Hamilton County Regional Planning Agency
Elements of a continuity plan

**Essential Functions** – critical activities

**Orders of Succession** – assumption of senior agency positions

**Delegations of Authority** – identification of authority

**Continuity of Facilities** – alternative locations/options

**Continuity of Communications**

**Vital Records Management** – information, documents, technology

**Human Capital** – emergency employees

**Tests, Training, and Exercises** – plan supports essential functions

**Devolution of Control and Direction** – transfer essential functions outside the agency

**Reconstitution** – resume normal agency operations
Purpose

TPO function only

Ensure the continuity of essential office functions in the occurrence of a major event/emergency/disaster

The COOP will be activated exclusively when operations cannot continue at the RPA offices and must be accommodated through telework or moved to an alternate location.
Essential Functions – The critical activities performed by organizations, especially after a disruption of normal activities.

- Provide technical support and information to assist in planning and restoration of the region's transportation system.
- Maintain contact with TDOT, GDOT, FHWA and FTA and local partners.
- Ensure that the integrity and compliance of the TPO’s planning programs are maintained.
- Continuity of TPO Executive Board meetings.
- Provide compensation associated with TPO agreements and maintain TPO grant invoicing.
- Continuity of TPO projects and recurring activities.
Succession – Provisions for the assumption of senior agency offices during an emergency in the event that any of those officials are unavailable to execute their legal duties.
Delegations of Authority – Identification, by position, of the authorities for making policy determinations and decisions.

COOP initiated
Executive Director or Acting Executive Director
  Deputy Director
    Strategic Long-range Planning Director
    Research and Analysis Director
-OR-

Hamilton County Public Works Administrator
Continuity Facilities – Locations other than the primary facility (or other nontraditional options) used to carry out essential functions, particularly in a continuity event.

- Working remotely
- Temporary office relocation
- **Partner:** General Services
  - Outside the 100 and 500-year floodplain
  - Located along a CARTA transit route
  - Access to the City’s IT systems
Continuity of Communications – Communications that provide the capability to perform essential functions, in conjunction with other agencies, under all conditions.

- Staff cell phones
- Additional cell phones
- Gmail
- General email: tpo@chattanooga.gov
- Notice to outside contacts
- Partner: IT department’s COOP/recovery plan- Emergency cell phone charging stations and emergency cellular tower setup
Vital Records Management – the identification, protection and ready availability of electronic and hardcopy documents, references, records, information systems, data management software and equipment needed to support essential functions during a continuity situation.
Vital Records

- Digital files: online, server, offsite server backup
- Hard copy files: state location and labeled “TPO”
- Off-site storage of historic records: stated location and have separate listing of all TPO files in storage
- **Partner:** IT department’s COOP/recovery plan covers temporary emergency equipment, permanent replacement equipment, software replacement, restoration of important computer/data system access, and safe offsite storage and restoration of server backup data
City of Chattanooga Records Retention Policy

- Scanned RPA’s library
- Scanned all old regulations and ordinances
- Cleared out offices, file cabinets and storage units and consolidated files
- Confirmed off-site storage room for expansion
“If Chattanooga continues to increase in size, the city is certain ultimately to have to strengthen these weak spots of its downtown circulation system. As a matter of economy such work should be considered now in relation to a system of traffic thoroughfares serving the entire region and should be undertaken at the first opportunity.” -1924 Major Streets Plan
Human Capital – during a continuity event, emergency employees and other special categories of employees who are activated by an agency to perform assigned response duties.

- First priority is the health and well-being of each employee and their family
- Essential personnel identified
Tests, Training, and Exercises – Measures to ensure that an agency’s continuity plan is capable of supporting the continued execution of the agency’s essential functions throughout the duration of a continuity event.

Plan maintenance and after-action review of the plan
Devolution of Control and Direction – capability to transfer statutory authority and responsibility for essential functions from an agency’s primary operating staff and facilities to other agency employees and facilities.

- Hamilton County, TN Administrator of Public Works
  - TPO management team
  - TPO staff
  - RPA management team
- RPA Executive Committee
- Emergency Executive Board meeting
Emergency Executive Board meeting

- Only to be used in the event of a community or widespread emergency
- Strives to meet both Participation Plan and TN Open Meetings requirements
- Allows voting by conference call
- **Partner:** City Attorney’s Office reviewed and gave input regarding state law requirements
Reconstitution – The process by which surviving and/or replacement agency personnel resume normal agency operations from the original or replacement primary operating facility.

Termination of event
Other elements...

- Initiation and notification
- Employee Contact List
- Agency Organizational Chart
- Emergency and Nonemergency Contacts
- Evacuation Procedures, including office equipment and records
- Revision History
Lessons learned

How deep is 58 feet?
The Tennessee Aquarium measures 120 feet tall. The all-time worst flood in Chattanooga, in 1867, peaked at 58 feet, almost half the height of the aquarium.

Resources:
FEMA COOP Webpage – a collection of COOP-related resources collected by FEMA: [https://www.fema.gov/media-library/resources-documents/collections/343](https://www.fema.gov/media-library/resources-documents/collections/343)

COOP Training – computer-based training courses; the first few courses provide a good overview of continuity planning: [https://www.fema.gov/continuity-excellence-series-professional-and-master-practitioner-continuity-certificate-programs](https://www.fema.gov/continuity-excellence-series-professional-and-master-practitioner-continuity-certificate-programs)

TEMA: Vital Records Management: [www.tennessee.gov/assets/entities/.../save_act_vital_records_mgmt.ppt](www.tennessee.gov/assets/entities/.../save_act_vital_records_mgmt.ppt)