



COLUMBUS–MUSCOGEE COUNTY, GA

**Emergency Management Agency
& Homeland Security**

Emergency Operations Plan 2026

Authority Letter

The most fundamental responsibility of government is to protect the safety, health, and welfare of the public. An effective and coordinated emergency management program is essential to ensuring that Columbus–Muscogee County can meet this responsibility when our residents, businesses, and visitors are threatened or affected by emergencies or disasters.

The Columbus–Muscogee County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) establishes the framework for the Columbus Consolidated Government (CCG) to organize, coordinate, and direct emergency management activities during large-scale or complex incidents. The EOP outlines the county’s overarching approach to saving lives, protecting property, preserving public health and safety, and ensuring the continuity of government. While this plan defines the county’s operational structure and coordination processes, it is not intended to address specific hazards or incident scenarios. Those details are found in the functional Emergency Support Functions (ESFs), and hazard-specific annexes that accompany this plan.

This EOP accomplishes the following:

- Establishes a countywide incident management organization designed to support and coordinate on-scene operations, maintain situational awareness, ensure effective communication across all levels of government, sustain continuity of government, and manage public information.
- Defines the operational concepts and structures used to manage emergencies, crises, disasters, and catastrophic incidents affecting Columbus–Muscogee County.
- Provides a flexible, all-hazards framework that can be adapted to a wide variety of anticipated emergency events, including severe weather, hazardous materials incidents, infrastructure disruptions, technological emergencies, and public health threats.

This plan identifies the emergency management roles and responsibilities of all Columbus–Muscogee County departments and partner agencies. It describes how these organizations coordinate with Columbus–Muscogee County Emergency Management and Homeland Security to execute an effective, timely, and unified response. The plan also establishes how local emergency response agencies integrate with state and federal operations through Georgia Emergency Management Agency and Homeland Security (GEMA/HS), federal partners, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations.

The Columbus–Muscogee County EOP supports and maintains compliance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS), the Incident Command System (ICS), the National Response Framework (NRF), and the National Preparedness Goal, including the principles found in FEMA’s Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 101. Through this alignment, the plan enhances multi-agency coordination, resource management, situational awareness, and public information functions during emergency operations.

Approval and Implementation

This EOP describes the management and coordination of resources and personnel during periods of a disaster and/or major emergency. This comprehensive emergency operations plan is developed to ensure mitigation and preparedness, appropriate response and timely recovery from natural and man-made hazards which may affect residents of Columbus-Muscogee County, Georgia. This plan is also intended to clarify expectations for an effective response by local officials in support of first responders in the field, which can save lives, protect property, and more quickly restore essential services.

This EOP was developed by the Columbus-Muscogee County Emergency Management & Homeland Security in conjunction with other local agencies, non-governmental organizations, and private sector partners. This EOP is aligned with the National Response Framework, the National Disaster Recovery Framework, and guidance from the Georgia Emergency Operations Plan. It was also developed with lessons learned from previous disasters and emergencies that have threatened Muscogee County, as well as exercises and training events.

This plan supersedes the Muscogee County Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP) dated 12-JUN-18 and is valid for a period of three (3) years from the date signed, unless a revision is required sooner by the undersigned.

Date

B.H. "Skip" Henderson, III

Mayor,

Columbus Consolidated Government

Muscogee County, Georgia

Public Safety Signature Page

Greg Countryman, Sheriff

Muscogee County Sheriff's Office

Chance D. Corbett, Director

Columbus–Muscogee County Emergency Management & Homeland Security

Salvatore Scarpa, Fire Chief

Columbus Fire & Emergency Medical Services
Columbus Consolidated Government

Stoney Mathis, Police Chief

Columbus Police Department
Columbus Consolidated Government

Herbert Walker, Warden

Muscogee County Prison

A RESOLUTION

NO. _____

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ADOPT A COLUMBUS-MUSCOGEE COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY & HOMELAND SECURITY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN FOR 2026-2028

WHEREAS, Columbus Code Section 2-27 (a) (4)(A) authorizes the Mayor to activate the Columbus/Muscogee County emergency operations plan; and

WHEREAS, the current Emergency Operations Plan has been in effect since 2018; and

WHEREAS, it is now recommended by the Mayor and the Director of Emergency Management that an updated and restated version of the plan be presented to Council for adoption; and

WHEREAS, the 2018 plan will be repealed and replaced by the attached plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF COLUMBUS, GEORGIA HEREBY

RESOLVES:

1) The Columbus Council hereby adopts the Columbus-Muscogee County Emergency Management Agency & Homeland Security Plan attached as Exhibit A to this Resolution; and

2) It is intended that the Plan be a working document, which may from time to time be amended as recommended by GEMA or FEMA; and

3) A current copy of said plan, together with any updates will be kept on file in the office of the Clerk of Council; and

4) The plan, and any future amendments will become effective upon its signature by the Mayor and each of the Public Safety Department Heads.

Introduced at a regular meeting of the Council of Columbus, held on the 13th of January, 2026 and adopted at said meeting by the affirmative vote _____ members of Council.

Record of Change

Change #	Date	Part Affected	Date Posted	Who Posted

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Record of Distribution

Agency	Name, Title	Date of Delivery	Copies

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The Columbus-Muscogee County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), also referred to as the “Base Plan,” establishes a comprehensive framework for coordinated response and initial recovery operations during large-scale or complex emergencies and disasters. It is designed to ensure effective collaboration among local government agencies, departments, and partner organizations when managing emergencies that exceed routine response capabilities.

The EOP outlines the roles and responsibilities and authorities of participating agencies and organizations, the conditions and procedures for resource mobilization, and describes the organizational structures and operational concepts used to coordinate emergency actions across the county.

The EOP is developed using an all-hazards approach, ensuring a consistent operational framework that can be applied to any type of emergency (natural or human-caused), while allowing flexibility to address unique hazards or incidents. Incident annexes supplement the base plan by providing additional guidance and procedures for particular types of emergencies or disasters.

1.2 Scope

The EOP provides guidance on response activities to Columbus-Muscogee County’s more likely and demanding large-scale emergencies and disasters, which are considered to be high-impact events that will likely require a coordinated and effective response by an appropriate combination of city (county), private-sector, and non-governmental entities to save lives, minimize damage, and provide the basis for long-term community recovery and mitigation activities.

The EOP addresses the hazards and threats extracted from a Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) conducted for Columbus-Muscogee County.

The EOP introduces the fundamentals of mitigation and long-term recovery but is not the primary document for these activities. It also references activities occurring in all phases of the emergency management cycle; however, the primary focus of this document remains an operational plan that describes the basic strategies, assumptions, operational goals, and objectives in coordinating and mobilizing resources to support emergency management response and recovery activities.

The EOP applies to all participating departments, offices, and agencies of the jurisdictions contained within the geographical boundary of Columbus-Muscogee County and distinguishes between incidents that require emergency management

coordination, termed disasters or emergencies, and most incidents that are handled by responsible departments, offices, or agencies through other established authorities and existing plans.

1.2.1 Plan Components

Base Plan: The Base Plan provides the foundational structure for emergency management in Columbus–Muscogee County. It outlines the county’s approach to incident management and describes how the consolidated government, private-sector partners, and non-governmental organizations coordinate during emergencies and disasters. The Base Plan establishes the core elements of the county’s emergency operations framework, including the purpose of the plan, the situation and hazard environment, planning assumptions, the concept of operations, organizational structure, roles and responsibilities, and administrative, logistical, and operational support processes.

Emergency Support Function (ESF) Annexes: Agency response is organized into 15 different functional groups called ESF’s. The ESF Annexes detail the missions, policies, structures, and responsibilities of ESF Lead and Support Agencies for coordinating resource and programmatic support to Columbus-Muscogee County during incidents of critical significance.

Support Annexes: Support Annexes address commonly required emergency functions that do not fall within the scope of ESFs. These Annexes address the plans and coordination required from tasked agencies to support the functional area in an emergency. The Support Annexes are not incident-specific and are intended to apply to incidents of all types. Examples include Training and Exercise and EOC Staff Manual.

Incident Annexes: While the EOP is an all-hazards plan, some incident types warrant additional attention based on the level of risk they present, unique planning requirements or regulations involved. Appendices provide other relevant supporting information, including terms, definitions, and authorities.

The EOP is intended to capture and reflect the cooperative spirit of all senior elected and appointed leaders and their organizations to partner in a comprehensive emergency management program to protect the lives and property of all Columbus-Muscogee County residents and visitors.

2.0 Situation Overview and Assumptions

2.1 Location

Columbus–Muscogee County is a consolidated city–county government located in west-central Georgia along the Alabama state line. Established through consolidation in 1971, the unified government structure combines municipal and county services, with all city council members also serving as county commissioners.

The county covers approximately 216.5 square miles and functions as a major urban center in the region. As of July 1, 2024, census estimates indicate a population of 201,830 residents. Columbus–Muscogee County is bordered by Chattahoochee County, Georgia, to the south and east, and by Russell County, Alabama, across the Chattahoochee River to the west.

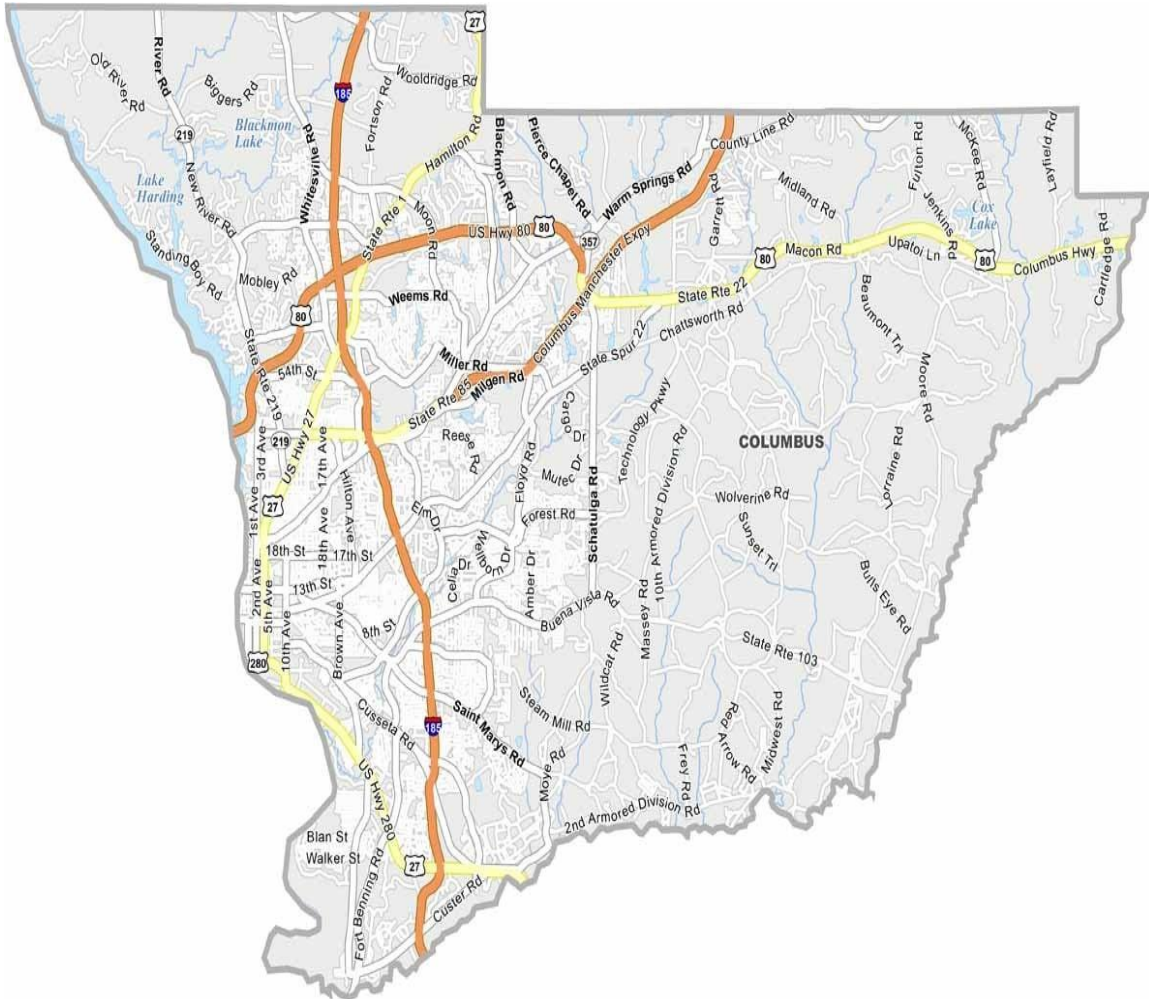
The county also contains a significant portion of Fort Benning, a major U.S. Army installation that extends into Chattahoochee County, Georgia, and includes approximately 12,000 acres in Russell County, Alabama.

2.2 Geographic

Columbus–Muscogee County is situated on the fall line of the eastern United States, where the Piedmont region transitions into the Coastal Plain. This geographic position creates diverse terrain that includes rolling hills to the north and flatter, sandy soils to the south. The Chattahoochee River forms the county’s western boundary and serves as a major natural, recreational, and economic resource.

Elevation varies across the county, ranging from 200 to 500 feet above sea level. The combination of riverine areas, urban development, forested land, and military training grounds influences the county’s infrastructure layout and impacts hazard exposure, including risks related to flooding, severe weather, wildfires, and technological or human-caused incidents.

The county’s climate is classified as humid subtropical, with hot summers, mild winters, and seasonal severe weather threats such as tornadoes, thunderstorms, and tropical system remnants moving inland from the Gulf of America (formally Gulf of Mexico). These geographic and climatic factors directly influence emergency planning, response needs, and hazard mitigation priorities.



2.3 Hazard Profile

Columbus–Muscogee County faces a range of natural, technological, and human-caused hazards identified through the county’s Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and historical incident data. These hazards vary in frequency and severity but have the potential to impact life safety, property, infrastructure, and essential government functions. The following profiles summarize the primary hazards considered in the development of this Emergency Operations Plan.

2.3.1 Potential Hazards

Columbus-Muscogee County is subjected to the effects of many disasters, varying widely in type and magnitude from local impacts to statewide in scope.

Table 1: Hazard Identification and Grouping

Natural Hazard, Risk & Vulnerability Summary

Hazard	Likelihood Score	Preparedness Score	Impact Score	Total Score
Severe Thunderstorms	99	63	56	144
Tornado	69	3	28	100
Earthquake	2	38	8	48
Severe Winter Weather	18	16	8	42
Flooding	33	0	5	38
Emergent Infectious Disease	4	9	22	35
Drought	3	15	2	20
Wildfire	4	5	4	13
Land Slide	0	11	0	11
Extreme Temperatures	5	6	0	11
Tropical Cyclone	0	0	6	6

Technological Hazard, Risk & Vulnerability Summary

Hazard	Likelihood Score	Preparedness Score	Impact Score	Total Score
Terrorism	25	63	56	144
Financial System Failure*	0	27	19	48
Electromagnetic Pulse**	0	28	18	46
Utility Failure***	11	15	9	45
Emergent Infectious Disease	4	9	22	35
Infrastructure Failure***	2	9	11	22
Hazardous Materials Incident	1	12	8	21
Transportation Incident	0	18	3	21
Supply Chain Issues****	4	8	5	17
Dam Failure	3	4	8	15
Industrial Incident*****	6	4	4	14
Water Contamination*****	0	4	9	13
Environmental/Agricultural Incident*****	0	6	6	12

* Financial System Failure was incorporated into many of the other hazards on the list, including Terrorism

** Electromagnetic Pulse was incorporated into Terrorism, Critical Infrastructure Failure, and Hazardous Materials Incident

*** Utility Failure and Infrastructure Failure were combined into Critical Infrastructure Failure

**** Supply Chain Issues were incorporated into many other hazards, such as Transportation Incident and Critical Infrastructure Failure

***** *Industrial Incident and Water Contamination were incorporated into Transportation Incident and Hazardous Materials Incident*

***** *Environmental/Agricultural Incident was incorporated into Hazardous Materials Incident and Emergent Infectious Disease*

2.4 Planning Assumptions

The Columbus–Muscogee County EOP is based on planning assumptions that outline expected operating conditions during emergencies and identify factors that may affect the execution of the plan. These assumptions guide preparedness efforts, resource allocation, and operational decision-making. During incidents, these assumptions also help identify where adjustments are needed as real-time conditions become known. They reflect the intent and priorities of senior officials regarding emergency management operations.

The following assumptions apply when activating or implementing this plan:

General Incident Expectations:

- Emergencies or complex events may occur at any time, with little or no warning, and may escalate faster than local resources can manage.
- It is the responsibility of elected officials and designated response agencies to save lives, protect property, alleviate human suffering, sustain survivors, restore critical services and facilities, and protect the environment.
- Emergencies are typically managed at the lowest organizational and jurisdictional level. Local governments will take immediate actions to mitigate impacts to the best of their ability.
- During a declared State of Emergency, the EMA Director (or designee), as the county's emergency management authority, has primary authority to coordinate the deployment of resources to facilitate effective response, recovery, and mitigation activities.
- The impacts of emergencies may vary widely in scope, intensity, and geographic extent from isolated, localized damage to widespread and catastrophic devastation. Multiple areas of the county may be affected simultaneously.

Populations, Needs, and Vulnerabilities:

- Some individuals or groups may require additional assistance based on disabilities, limited mobility, geographic isolation, communication barriers, financial limitations, cultural or religious considerations, or limited English proficiency.

Organizational Readiness and Responsibilities:

- Agencies and entities assigned responsibilities in the EOP will maintain plans, standard operating procedures (SOPs), mutual-aid agreements, and contracts necessary to fulfill their missions.
- All participating departments and organizations are expected to be prepared to execute assigned responsibilities outlined in the EOP, supporting plans, and joint or regional operational plans.

Mutual Aid and External Support:

- When local resources are insufficient, mutual aid from neighboring jurisdictions is expected and will supplement emergency response in a coordinated and efficient manner.
- State and federal assistance, when provided, will supplement, not replace, local and county efforts.
- Columbus–Muscogee County will request assistance from neighboring jurisdictions and escalate requests to GEMA/HS when incidents exceed local response and resource capabilities.
- When Columbus–Muscogee County receives a request for assistance from another jurisdiction, the County will take reasonable actions to provide requested resources, as long as they do not compromise essential local services.

Warning and Forecasting:

- Effective early warning systems and forecasting capabilities exist and will provide notice for certain hazards; however, not all disasters can be anticipated.

Continuity of Leadership:

- If the Mayor is unable to fulfill their duties, the Mayor Pro-Tem will assume mayoral responsibilities.
- If the EMA Director is unable to fulfill their duties, unless otherwise designated by the public safety director, the EMA Deputy Director will assume operational leadership; if both are unavailable, the next designated Emergency Management Specialist will serve as Acting EMA Director.

3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 General

The Columbus–Muscogee County Emergency Management and Homeland Security identifies threats and hazards that pose risks to life, property, the environment, and critical infrastructure. To address these risks, the County develops and maintains emergency plans, procedures, and capabilities designed to coordinate and support response and recovery activities. These plans are validated through exercises and real-world incidents.

The Columbus Consolidated Government adheres to the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and implements the Incident Command System (ICS) as its standard incident management structure. Columbus–Muscogee County aligns its operations with the Georgia Emergency Management Agency and Homeland Security (GEMA/HS) to ensure statewide integration and coordinated emergency response.

The goal is to maintain a resilient, coordinated, and scalable incident management structure that incorporates local government departments, public safety agencies, community-based organizations, volunteer groups, the private sector, and neighboring jurisdictions.

3.2 National Response Framework (NRF)

The NRF is based on the principle that incidents are managed at the local level first. Columbus–Muscogee County will use its own resources, supported by regional mutual aid, to manage most emergencies.

When local capabilities are exceeded, Columbus–Muscogee County may request assistance through GEMA/HS. If state capabilities are insufficient, the Governor may request federal assistance through the NRF.

The NRF establishes the structure for federal support to state and local governments while ensuring that the authority of first responders and local officials remains intact. The NRF and NIMS work together to ensure seamless coordination among local, state, tribal, federal, non-governmental, and private-sector partners.

3.3 National Incident Management System (NIMS)

NIMS provides a standardized framework enabling Columbus–Muscogee County agencies, private-sector partners, and other stakeholders to operate under a unified approach. The County implements NIMS components including:

- Preparedness

- Communications and Information Management
- Resource Management
- Command and Coordination
- Ongoing Management and Maintenance

NIMS allows integration across all levels of government and disciplines, regardless of incident complexity or cause.

3.4 Incident Command System (ICS)

ICS is the standardized, on-scene management system used for all emergencies and planned events in Columbus–Muscogee County. ICS provides a scalable structure that integrates personnel, equipment, and procedures from multiple agencies without being constrained by jurisdictional boundaries.

ICS supports:

- Clear chain of command
- Common terminology
- Interoperable communications
- Resource tracking
- Unified Command, when multiple jurisdictions work together to accomplish objectives.

On-Scene Incident Command (IC) or Unified Command (UC) maintains tactical control at the incident site, while the Columbus–Muscogee County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) supports coordination, resource management, situational awareness, and policy-level guidance.

3.5 Integration of Federal, State, and Local Systems

This EOP, together with NIMS, ICS, and the NRF, integrates local actions with state and national systems.

Effective incident management requires coordinated actions among:

- On-Scene Incident Command or Unified Command.
- Columbus–Muscogee County EOC.
- Columbus Consolidated Government leadership.
- GEMA/HS Field Operations and the State Operations Center (SOC).
- Federal coordinating structures when activated.

- Voluntary, nonprofit, and private-sector partners.

These entities collectively form the Columbus–Muscogee County Incident Management System.

3.6 Phases of Emergency Management

Columbus–Muscogee County follows an all-hazards, comprehensive emergency management approach consisting of the four phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. These phases often overlap and influence one another.

3.6.1 Mitigation

Mitigation reduces or eliminates long-term risks. Activities include:

- Hazard mitigation planning.
- Land use regulations and building codes.
- Infrastructure resilience projects.
- Public information and community relations.
- Local ordinances that reduce hazard impacts.

Mitigation actions occur before and after incidents and support long-term community resilience.

3.6.2 Preparedness

Preparedness activities are taken in advance of an emergency and develop operational capabilities, enact protective measures, and enhance effective responses to a disaster.

Preparedness develops operational capabilities and readiness through:

- Development and maintenance of emergency operation plans (EOPs), standard operating procedures (SOPs), other plans and annexes.
- Training programs and exercises following Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Programs (HSEEP).
- Public education and community engagement initiatives.
- Resource inventory and mutual aid agreements.
- Coordination with regional partners.

3.6.3 Response

The response phase includes all actions taken immediately before, during, and after an incident to protect life, stabilize the situation, and preserve property and the environment. For operational clarity, Columbus–Muscogee County recognizes three

primary categories of response: Pre-Emergency (Crisis) Response, Immediate Emergency Response and Ongoing (Sustained) Emergency Response.

These categories may overlap depending on the nature of the incident, available warning, and the rate at which conditions escalate.

Pre-Emergency (Crisis) Response occurs when early warning or predictive information is available (e.g., severe weather forecasts, river flood stages, public health alerts, wildfire conditions). This phase emphasizes preparedness actions designed to lessen impacts and position resources for rapid response.

Pre-Emergency (Crisis) Response actions include:

- Alerts and mobilizing agencies
- Public warnings and risk communication
- Protective action decisions
- Coordination with partners
- Activation of emergency authorities
- Initial EOC readiness actions

Pre-Emergency (Crisis) actions are critical for reducing the severity of impacts and enabling a rapid, coordinated response.

Immediate Emergency Response phase begins once an incident occurs or when protective actions must be taken without delay.

Immediate Response focuses on:

- Life safety
- Incident stabilization
- Protection of property and critical infrastructure

Immediate Response activities are typically conducted by first responders and essential personnel operating directly at or near the incident site.

Immediate Response actions include:

- Life safety operations
- Incident Command Post establishment
- Initial damage assessment
- Resource deployment
- Initial coordination with EOC

During this phase, control of the situation is a top priority. Most actions remain tactical, and field-driven under ICS.

Ongoing (Sustained) Emergency Response begins once the initial incident is stabilized but response operations must continue, often over multiple operational periods. This phase addresses both immediate needs and emerging longer-term challenges.

Ongoing (Sustained) Response actions include:

- Continuation of life safety and property protection operations
- Mass care and human services
- Public information and media coordination
- Situation analysis and planning
- Full or partial EOC activation
- Damage assessments
- Coordination with external partners

Ongoing (Sustained) operations continue until conditions allow recovery operations to expand and eventually become the primary focus. Columbus–Muscookee County uses the NIMS Incident Complexity Guide to determine the appropriate response posture and resource needs.

Type 5	Incident Effect Indicators	Incident Management Indicators
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incident shows no resistance to stabilization or mitigation ▪ Resources typically meet incident objectives within one or two hours of arriving on scene ▪ Minimal effects to population immediately surrounding the incident ▪ Few or no evacuations necessary during mitigation ▪ No adverse impact on critical infrastructure and key resources (CIKR) ▪ Elected/appointed governing officials and stakeholder groups require minimal or no coordination, and may not need notification ▪ Conditions or actions that caused the incident do not persist; as a result, there is no probability of a cascading event or exacerbation of the current incident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incident Commander (IC) position is filled, but Command and General Staff positions are unnecessary to reduce workload or span of control ▪ EOC activation is unnecessary ▪ Unified Command is not typically necessary ▪ One or more resources are necessary and receive direct supervision from the IC ▪ Resources may remain on scene for several hours, up to 24, but require little or no logistical support ▪ Formal incident planning process is not necessary ▪ Written Incident Action Plan (IAP) is unnecessary ▪ Limited aviation resources may be necessary and may use varying levels of air support
Examples: Type 5 incidents, events and exercises can include a vehicle fire, a medical response to an injured/sick person, a response to a suspicious package/ item, or a vehicle pursuit. Planned events can include a 5K or 10K road race.		

Type 4	Incident Effect Indicators	Incident Management Indicators
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incident shows low resistance to stabilization or mitigation ▪ Resources typically meet incident objectives within several hours of arriving on scene ▪ Incident may extend from several hours to 24 hours ▪ Limited effects to population surrounding incident ▪ Few or no evacuations necessary during mitigation ▪ Incident threatens, damages, or destroys a minimal number of residential, commercial or cultural properties ▪ CIKR may suffer adverse impacts ▪ CIKR mitigation measures are uncomplicated and can be implemented within one operational period ▪ Elected/appointed governing officials and stakeholder groups require minimal or no coordination, but they may need to be notified ▪ Conditions or actions that caused the original incident do not persist; as a result, there is low to no probability of a cascading event or exacerbation of the current incident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IC/Unified Command role is filled, but Command and General Staff positions are typically not necessary to reduce workload or span of control ▪ EOC activation may be necessary ▪ Resources receive direct supervision either from the IC/Unified Command or through an ICS leader position, such as a Task Force or Strike Team/Resource Team, to reduce span of control ▪ Division or Group Supervisor position may be filled for organizational or span of control purposes ▪ Multiple kinds and types of resources may be necessary ▪ Aviation resources may be necessary and may use varying levels of air support ▪ Resources may remain on scene for 24 hours or longer and may require limited logistical support ▪ Formal incident planning process is not necessary ▪ Written IAP is unnecessary, but leaders may complete a documented operational briefing for all incoming resources
	<p>Examples: Type 4 incidents, events and exercises can include a barricaded suspect, a hazardous materials (HAZMAT) spill on a roadway or waterway, a detonation of a small explosive device, a large commercial fire or a localized flooding event affecting a neighborhood or subdivision. Planned events can include a march, protest, festival, fair, or parade.</p>	

Type 3	Incident Effect Indicators	Incident Management Indicators
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incident shows moderate resistance to stabilization or mitigation ▪ Resources typically do not meet incident objectives within the first 24 hours of resources arriving on scene ▪ Incident may extend from several days to over one week ▪ Population within and immediately surrounding incident area may require evacuation or shelter during mitigation ▪ Incident threatens, damages, or destroys residential, commercial or cultural properties ▪ CIKR may suffer adverse impacts ▪ CIKR mitigation actions may extend into multiple operational periods ▪ Elected/appointed governing officials and stakeholder groups require some level of coordination ▪ Conditions or actions that caused the incident may persist; as a result, there is medium probability of a cascading event or exacerbation of the current incident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IC/Unified Command role is filled ▪ EOC activation may be necessary ▪ Command Staff positions are filled to reduce workload or span of control ▪ At least one General Staff position is filled to reduce workload or span of control ▪ Numerous resources receive supervision indirectly through the Operations Section and its subordinate positions ▪ Branch Director position(s) may be filled for organizational purposes and occasionally for span of control ▪ Division Supervisors, Group Supervisors, Task Forces and Strike Teams/Resource Teams are necessary to reduce span of control ▪ ICS functional units may be necessary to reduce workload ▪ Incident typically extends into multiple operational periods ▪ Resources may need to remain on scene for over a week and will require logistical support ▪ Incident may require an incident base to support resources ▪ Numerous kinds and types of resources may be required ▪ Aviation operations may involve multiple aircraft ▪ Number of responders depends on the kind of incident but could add up to several hundred personnel ▪ Leaders initiate and follow formal incident planning process ▪ Written IAP may be necessary for each operational period
	<p>Examples: Type 3 incidents, events and exercises can include a tornado that damages a small section of a city, village or town; a railroad tank car HAZMAT leak requiring evacuation of a neighborhood or section of a community; a detonation of a large explosive device; an active shooter; a water main break; a Category 1 or 2 hurricane; or a small aircraft crash in a populated area. Planned events can include a county fair or an auto racing event.</p>	

Type 2	Incident Effect Indicators	Incident Management Indicators
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incident shows high resistance to stabilization or mitigation ▪ Resources typically do not meet incident objectives within the first several days ▪ Incident may extend from several days to two weeks ▪ Population within and surrounding the general incident area is affected ▪ Affected population may require evacuation, shelter or housing during mitigation for several days to months ▪ Incident threatens damages, or destroys residential, commercial, and cultural properties ▪ CIKR may suffer adverse impacts, including destruction ▪ CIKR mitigation actions may extend into multiple operational periods, requiring considerable coordination ▪ Elected/appointed governing officials, political organization and stakeholder groups require a moderate level of coordination ▪ Incident has resulted in external influences, has widespread impact and involves political and media sensitivities requiring comprehensive management ▪ Conditions or actions that caused the original incident may persist, so a cascading event or exacerbation of the current incident is highly probable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IC/Unified Command role is filled ▪ EOC activation is likely necessary ▪ All Command Staff positions are filled ▪ All General Staff positions are filled ▪ Large numbers of resources receive supervision through the Operations Section ▪ Branch Director position(s) may be filled for organizational or span of control purposes ▪ Division Supervisors, Group Supervisors, Task Forces, Strike Teams and Resource Teams are necessary to reduce span of control ▪ Most ICS functional units are filled to reduce workload ▪ Incident extends into numerous operational periods ▪ Resources may need to remain on scene for several weeks and will require complete logistical support, as well as possible personnel replacement ▪ Incident requires an incident base and other ICS facilities for support ▪ Numerous kinds and types of resources may be required ▪ Complex aviation operations involving multiple aircraft may be involved ▪ Size and scope of resource mobilization necessitates a formal demobilization process ▪ Length of resource commitment may necessitate a transfer of command from one Incident Management Team (IMT) to a subsequent IMT ▪ Number of responders depends on the kind of incident but could add up to over 1,000 personnel ▪ Leaders initiate and follow formal incident planning process ▪ Written IAP is necessary for each operational period ▪ Leaders may order and deploy out-of-state resources such as through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC)
<p>Examples: Type 2 incidents, events and exercises can include a tornado that damages an entire section of a city, village or town; a railroad tank car HAZMAT leak requiring a several-days-long evacuation of an entire section of a city, village or town; a wildland fire in an area with numerous residences, requiring evacuations and several days of firefighting; a multi-event explosive device attack; or a river flooding event affecting an entire section of a city, village or town, with continued precipitation anticipated. Planned events can include a VIP visit, a large demonstration, a strike or a large concert.</p>		

Type 1	Incident Effect Indicators	Incident Management Indicators
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incident shows high resistance to stabilization or mitigation Incident objectives cannot be met within numerous operational periods Incident extends from two weeks to over a month Population within and surrounding the region or state where the incident occurred is significantly affected Incident threatens, damages, or destroys significant numbers of residential, commercial, and cultural properties Incident damages or destroys numerous CIKRs CIKR mitigation extends into multiple operational periods and requires long-term planning and extensive coordination Evacuated or relocated populations may require shelter or housing for several days to months Elected/appointed governing officials, political organizations and stakeholder groups require a high level of coordination Incident has resulted in external influences, has widespread impact and involves political and media sensitivities requiring comprehensive management Conditions or actions that caused the original incident still exist, so a cascading event or exacerbation of the current incident is highly probable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IC/Unified Command role is filled EOC activation is necessary Unified Command is complex due to the number of jurisdictions involved All Command Staff positions are filled; many include assistants All General Staff positions are filled; many include deputy positions Many resources receive supervision through an expanded Operations Section Branch Director position(s) may be filled for organizational or span of control purposes Division Supervisors, Group Supervisors, Task Forces, Strike Teams, and Resource Teams are necessary to reduce span of control Most or all ICS functional units are filled to reduce workload Incident extends into many operational periods Resources will likely need to remain on scene for several weeks and will require complete logistical support, as well as possible personnel replacement Incident requires an incident base and numerous other ICS facilities for support Numerous kinds and types of resources may be required, including many that trigger a formal demobilization process Federal assets and other nontraditional organizations – such as Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) and NGOs – may be involved in the response, requiring close coordination and support Complex aviation operations involving numerous aircraft may be involved Size and scope of resource mobilization necessitates a formal demobilization process Length of resource commitment may necessitate a transfer of command from one IMT to a subsequent IMT Number of responders depends on the kind of incident but could add up to over 1,000 personnel Leaders initiate and follow formal incident planning process Written IAP is necessary for each operational period Leaders may order and deploy out-of-state resources, such as through EMAC
	<p>Examples: Type 1 incidents, events and exercises can include a tornado with damage or destruction to an entire community; a Category 3, 4 or 5 hurricane; a pandemic; a railroad tank car explosion or multilevel explosive device destroying several neighborhoods and damaging others; a large wind-driven wildland fire threatening an entire city, village or town, causing several evacuations and destroying many homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure assets; or a widespread river flooding event in a city, village, or town, with continued precipitation anticipated. Planned events can include a political convention, the Super Bowl, the World Series or a presidential visit.</p>	

3.6.4 Recovery

Recovery operations begin at the onset of an emergency and continue until the community is restored to safe, stable, and sustainable conditions. Early recovery actions taken during the response phase enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of long-term recovery and help reduce disruptions to essential services.

Recovery includes:

- Short-term activities focused on reestablishing vital life-safety and community functions.
- Intermediate and long-term activities aimed at repairing, rebuilding, and revitalizing infrastructure, homes, businesses, and community systems.
- Cost recovery and program administration to support reimbursement and long-term resilience.

The recovery phase is an essential component of the emergency management cycle and must be coordinated across local, state, and federal partners, as well as the private sector, nonprofits, and community organizations.

Major objectives of the recovery period include:

- Reinstatement of family and community integrity.
- Provision and restoration of essential public services.
- Restoration of private and public property.
- Identification and mitigation of residual hazards.
- Integration of mitigation planning.
- Cost recovery and financial oversight.
- Coordination of state and federal assistance.

Recovery is a collaborative effort involving the Columbus–Muscogee County Emergency Management Agency, local government departments, community organizations, state agencies, and federal partners. Effective recovery planning and coordination help build a safer, more resilient community prepared for future incidents.

3.7 All-Hazards / Comprehensive Emergency Management Approach

Columbus–Muscogee County follows an all-hazards, comprehensive emergency management approach consistent with guidance from GEMA/HS and the NRF. This approach ensures that the County can effectively prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from all hazards regardless of cause, size, or complexity.

- Preparedness, prevention, and protection against hazards.
- Coordinated emergency response.
- Sustainable community recovery.
- Ongoing hazard mitigation.

Emergency management is a continuous and evolving cycle. Columbus–Muscogee County incorporates lessons learned from incidents, exercises, and after-action processes to strengthen preparedness, enhance resilience, and continuously improve operational capability.

3.8 Operational Objectives

The EOP is based on operational principles that guide emergency management activities in Columbus–Muscogee County. These objectives ensure a coordinated, efficient, and effective response to emergencies:

- Incidents are managed at the lowest appropriate level.
- Columbus–Muscogee County will use all available resources to protect life, property, and the environment.
- All incident management will follow NIMS and ICS principles.
- The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) provides resource coordination and communication with regional partners.

3.9 Emergency Operations Center (EOC)

The Columbus–Muscogee County EOC supports incident management by providing centralized coordination, resource support, situational awareness, and policy guidance.

Core functions of the EOC:

- Develops and maintains a Common Operating Picture and Situational Awareness.
- Coordinates resource requests, procurement, and mutual aid.
- Supports public information and warnings.
- Advises senior leadership decision-making.
- Coordinates with GEMA/HS and federal partners.

The EOC does not command on-scene operations; tactical command remains with the Incident Commander (IC) or Unified Command (UC).

3.9.1 EOC Locations

The Primary Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for Columbus–Muscogee County is located in the basement (Floor G) of City Hall, 1111 1st Avenue, Columbus, GA 31901.

The Alternate EOC is located at the Citizen Services Center, 3111 Citizens Way, Columbus, GA 31906, which maintains a designated room equipped to assume EOC functions if the primary EOC becomes inaccessible or inoperable.

Additional locations have been identified as alternate EOC locations to include the Muscogee County School District EOC, 2960 Macon Road, Columbus, GA 31906 and the campus of Columbus State University, 4225 University Avenue, Columbus, Georgia 31907

The Mobile Command Vehicle (MCV) may also serve as a Mobile EOC and can be deployed as needed. It may operate as a standalone EOC for field incidents, remote operations, or supplement the Primary or Alternate EOCs during large-scale or extended emergencies.

3.9.2 EOC Activation Triggers

The EOC may be activated for various reasons based on support requirements of a jurisdiction or organization, the context of a threat, the anticipation of events, or in response to an incident. Circumstances that might trigger activation include but are not limited to:

- Multi-agency or multi-jurisdictional incidents.
- Expected or ongoing escalation of an event.
- Severe weather or imminent threats.
- Requests from the Incident Commander.
- Direction from the EMA Director or elected officials.
- Large planned events. Examples include but are not limited to local scheduled special events.
- Predefined activation conditions described in this EOP.

3.9.3 EOC Activation Levels

The activation level of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) increases in size, scope, and complexity in alignment with the incident's needs. As incidents expand or require greater coordination, additional staff may be activated to support resource management, public information, situational awareness, decision support, and coordination with local, regional, and state partners.

The EOC operates at three activation levels, determined by the complexity of the incident, support requirements, and direction of EMA/HS leadership. During steady state (normal operations), the EOC remains ready for immediate activation. Emergency management personnel continuously maintain readiness by monitoring threats and hazards, coordinating with partner agencies, conducting training and exercises, developing plans, and maintaining facilities and equipment.

Level 3 Active Monitoring

A situation exists in which an event may impact Columbus-Muscogee County, or limited support may be needed to monitor and coordinate information.

- Potential hazards or emerging threats (e.g., severe weather outlooks, regional incidents, special events).
- EOC staffed with minimal personnel focused on situational awareness, notifications, and information sharing.
- No significant resources coordination needs are anticipated.

Level 2 Elevated Activation

An incident is imminent or occurring that may require enhanced coordination, additional staffing, or multi-agency involvement.

- Increased likelihood of local impacts requiring coordinated response.
- Partial staffing of the EOC, including representatives from key departments and Emergency Support Functions (ESFs).
- Limited or partial liaison support, depending on the type of incident.
- Resource support needs are expected or underway.

Level 1 – Full Activation

A major incident is occurring or is expected to occur that will significantly impact Columbus–Muscogee County and require county-wide, regional, and/or state assistance.

- Full EOC staffing, including General Staff, Section Chiefs, ESF representatives and necessary liaisons.
- Extensive multi-agency coordination and sustained resource management.
- Operation may transition to 24-hour staffing, shifts, and extended duration support.
- Requests for GEMA/HS and State Operations Center (SOC) assistance is likely and can be accomplished utilizing the state's incident management system online which is currently WebEOC.

3.10 Emergency Declarations

Emergency declarations provide the legal authority and mechanisms necessary to mobilize resources, activate emergency powers, and request state and federal assistance. There are three levels of emergency declarations that may apply to an incident depending on the scope, magnitude, complexity, and resource requirements of the event.

Local (County) Declaration

A Local (County) Emergency Declaration may be issued by the mayor or authorized designee when conditions exceed routine capabilities.

A local declaration:

- Activates the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP).
- Activates the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).
- Authorizes rapid mobilization and deployment of Columbus Consolidated Government (CCG) resources.
- Grants emergency powers for protective actions, procurement, and coordination.
- Allows Columbus–Muscogee County to formally request state assistance.

Local declarations may be necessary for severe weather events, hazardous materials releases, public health threats, major fires, or other significant emergencies.

State Declaration

A State of Emergency may be declared by the Governor of Georgia when Columbus–Muscogee County’s resources are insufficient to manage the incident, or when statewide coordination is required.

A State of Emergency may be declared by the Governor when:

- Local resources are insufficient.
- Multi-jurisdictional support is needed.
- State-level capabilities are required to support local response.

A State Declaration provides Columbus–Muscogee County access to:

- State agency personnel, equipment and resources.
- Specialized assistance from State Emergency Support Functions (ESFs).
- Support from the Georgia National Guard, when authorized.
- State logistical support and coordination through the State Operations Center (SOC).

Requests for state assistance are submitted by the Columbus-Muscogee EOC and coordinated by GEMA/HS.

Federal Declaration

If state resources are insufficient, the Governor may request a Federal Emergency or Major Disaster Declaration through FEMA under the Stafford Act.

If Columbus-Muscogee County is included in a federal declaration:

- Federal assistance becomes available to supplement County and State efforts.
- FEMA may provide Public Assistance (PA) and Individual Assistance (IA).
- May provide mitigation funding through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP).
- Additional federal agencies may provide direct support (USACE, USDA, HHS, SBA, HUD, etc.).
- GEMA/HS coordinates state and federal assistance to the County.
- The Columbus-Muscogee EOC coordinates distribution of assistance at the local level.

3.11 Transition from Response to Recovery

The recovery process is a sequence of interdependent and often overlapping activities that guide the community from incident stabilization to full restoration. As response actions decrease, recovery operations expand in scale and duration.

Early decisions such as resource prioritization, debris removal strategy, and public information messaging have significant impacts on the speed and effectiveness of long-term recovery. Pre-disaster planning, including the County's Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP) and Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP), helps accelerate this transition.

Recovery operations may run concurrently with response operations, particularly during complex or extended events involving multiple operational periods or multiple simultaneous incidents.

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) plays a central role in coordinating recovery activities until such time as a dedicated recovery structure is established.

Activation of Recovery Leadership

If the scale of the disaster warrants, a Recovery Task Force (or Recovery Committee) may be established to manage ongoing and long-term recovery operations.

- The EOC Manager and Planning Section Chief will evaluate the need for formal recovery organization.

- A recommendation will be made to the EMA Director if activation is appropriate.

Once activated, the Recovery Task Force becomes the primary coordinating body for long-term recovery efforts.

3.11.1 Recovery Timeframes

Because emergency management is a continuous cycle, recovery phases may overlap. Columbus–Muscogee County recognizes three primary recovery phases:

Short-Term Recovery

Short-term recovery focuses on stabilizing immediate impacts and restoring essential community functions. Activities may include:

- Life safety operations.
- Initial Damage Assessments (IDA).
- Reopening critical roads and transportation routes.
- Temporary power restoration.
- Emergency repairs to essential infrastructure and facilities.
- Public information updates and community assistance.
- Support to shelters and mass care operations.

Short-term recovery begins during the response phase and continues until immediate threats are addressed.

Intermediate Recovery

Intermediate recovery seeks to restore critical systems and return the community to a functional though not necessarily pre-disaster state. Activities may include:

- Infrastructure repairs and restoration of utilities.
- Temporary housing and assistance programs.
- Business and economic stabilization.
- Expanded debris management operations.
- Coordination with GEMA/HS and FEMA for PA/IA programs.
- Continued support for vulnerable populations.

This phase bridges short-term stabilization with long-term recovery.

Long-Term Recovery

Long-term recovery focuses on restoring the community to “near normal” or improved conditions, emphasizing resilience and mitigation. Activities may include:

- Permanent reconstruction of infrastructure.

- Long-term housing solutions and redevelopment.
- Economic revitalization and business continuity programs.
- Hazard mitigation projects (HMGP, BRIC, etc.).
- Community planning and revitalization efforts.
- Partnerships with federal agencies (HUD, SBA, USDA, etc.).

Long-term recovery may span months to years depending on the scale and complexity of the disaster.

4.0 Direction, Control, and Coordination

4.1 General

The Columbus–Muscogee County’s emergency management structure includes all local government departments and constitutional offices, private-sector partners, volunteer organizations, and non-governmental agencies. Each organization plays a defined role in preparing for, responding to, recovering from, and mitigating the effects of all hazards.

Most Columbus Consolidated Government departments maintain emergency functions that parallel or expand upon their normal responsibilities. Each department is responsible for maintaining its own emergency procedures, continuity plans, and staffing assignments in support of the EOP.

Emergency responsibilities are established in the Columbus Consolidated Government Charter including Sections 4-201 and 3-201(3) which establish emergency powers, governance authority, and the process for adopting emergency ordinances during emergencies or disasters.

4.2 Executive Policy Group (EPG)

During significant or complex emergency situations, the Emergency Management & Homeland Security (EMA/HS) Director may request that the jurisdiction’s senior leadership convene as the Executive Policy Group (EPG). This group is composed of key decision-makers, including the Mayor, City Manager, and other designated executives, who provide policy guidance and strategic direction during emergencies.

The EPG collaborates closely with the EMA/HS Director to review incident information, evaluate emerging issues, and support policy-level decisions necessary to manage the event. While the EPG provides strategic oversight, the EMA/HS Director is responsible for coordinating and leading the overall emergency management effort, ensuring that response operations align with established objectives, legal authorities, and NIMS/ICS principles.

The EPG does not direct field-level tactics but ensures unified executive support, clarification of authorities, and removal of policy-level barriers to effective incident management.

The Executive Policy Group (EPG) is composed of but not limited to the following:

- Mayor
- City Manager
- Deputy City Managers
- Sheriff

- Emergency Management Director
- Fire Chief
- Police Chief
- City Attorney
- MCSD Superintendent
- IT Director
- Public Health Representative
- Healthcare Coalition leader

4.3 Assignment of Responsibilities (General)

This section outlines the general responsibilities and capabilities of entities outside the direct jurisdictional control of Columbus–Muscogee County that are known to support, or are capable of supporting, emergency response and recovery operations.

4.3.1 Individuals and Households

Individuals and households play a critical role in community preparedness and resilience. Taking appropriate protective actions before, during, and after an emergency supports personal safety and reduces the demand for public safety resources.

Residents of Columbus–Muscogee County are encouraged to:

- Understand local warning and alert systems, including outdoor warning sirens, Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), Hyper-Reach notifications, media broadcasts, EM smartphone app, and official government messaging.
- Prepare to evacuate or shelter in place, depending on the nature of the hazard, by maintaining emergency kits, essential supplies, and mobility or medical plans as needed.
- Develop and practice a family emergency and reunification plan to ensure all household members know how to communicate, reunite, and respond if separated during an incident.

By taking these actions, individuals and families strengthen their personal readiness and contribute to the overall resilience of the Columbus–Muscogee County community.

4.3.2 Local Government

Local government serves as the primary authority for emergency management and public safety in Columbus–Muscogee County. The Columbus Consolidated Government (CCG) is responsible for initiating and coordinating response and recovery operations during emergencies and disasters, ensuring the protection of life, property, and the environment.

CCG maintains operational control over all resources committed to an incident within its jurisdiction—regardless of whether those resources originate from local departments, mutual aid partners, state agencies, or federal assistance programs. Columbus–Muscogee County must therefore plan, train, and maintain operational capability to meet its responsibilities, supported as necessary by assistance from the State of Georgia and the federal government.

Local government leadership, departments, and operational agencies work together under NIMS/ICS principles to coordinate emergency actions, maintain continuity of government, and support the whole-community approach to preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation.

4.3.3 State Government

The State of Georgia, through the Georgia Emergency Management Agency and Homeland Security (GEMA/HS), plays a critical supporting role in local emergency management. GEMA/HS provides guidance, coordination, and resources to assist Columbus–Muscogee County in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies and disasters.

GEMA/HS supports local jurisdictions by offering:

- Planning assistance, including templates, technical guidance, and coordination support.
- Training and exercise programs that enhance local readiness and compliance with state and federal requirements.
- Grant management, including administration of Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG), hazard mitigation funding, and other preparedness programs.
- Hazard mitigation assistance, supporting development and implementation of long-term risk reduction projects.
- Technical expertise in areas such as disaster recovery, public warning, communications, and situational awareness.

During disasters, GEMA/HS coordinates state resources and serves as the primary liaison between local governments and federal agencies such as FEMA. When local capabilities are exceeded, Columbus–Muscogee County may request additional state support through the State Operations Center (SOC) using established Mission Resource Request (MRR) procedures.

4.3.4 Federal Government

The Federal Government provides assistance when the severity and magnitude of an emergency exceed the capabilities of local and state governments. Federal support is delivered primarily through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), operating within the framework of the National Response Framework (NRF) and other national preparedness doctrines.

Upon a Presidential emergency or major disaster declaration, FEMA coordinates federal resources, technical expertise, and financial assistance to supplement state and local efforts. This support may include:

- Emergency response and incident stabilization resources
- Public Assistance and Individual Assistance programs
- Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funding
- Technical guidance in recovery, debris management, mitigation, and resilience planning

The State of Georgia works with FEMA through GEMA/HS to ensure federal resources are properly requested, deployed, and managed. Columbus–Muscogee County coordinates with the State Operations Center (SOC) and GEMA/HS to access FEMA programs and ensure that federal assistance is integrated into local operations in accordance with established procedures.

4.3.5 Non-Governmental and Volunteer Organizations

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and volunteer groups play a vital role in supporting emergency response and recovery operations within Columbus–Muscogee County. Organizations such as the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, faith-based ministries, and various community and civic groups provide essential services that complement governmental capabilities.

These organizations may assist with:

- Sheltering and mass care operations.
- Feeding and hydration services.
- Distribution of emergency supplies.
- Emotional and spiritual care.
- Support for displaced or vulnerable populations.
- Donations management and volunteer coordination.

NGOs and volunteer groups operate as key partners within the county's whole-community emergency management framework and may be integrated into the EOC structure through ESF-6 (Mass Care), ESF-7 (Logistics), ESF-11 (Agriculture & Food), and other ESFs as appropriate. Collaboration with these organizations strengthens the county's ability to meet community needs during all phases of an emergency.

4.3.6 Private Sector

Private-sector organizations play an essential role in emergency management within Columbus–Muscogee County. Businesses, industries, and critical infrastructure partners may assist with a wide range of emergency functions depending on their capabilities, resources, and operational needs.

Private-sector contributions may include:

- Continuity of essential services, such as utilities, transportation, communications, fuel, and healthcare.
- Facility support, including the provision of staging areas, shelters, or distribution sites.
- Specialized equipment, personnel, or technical expertise
- Supply-chain support, including procurement, transportation, and distribution of goods.
- Restoration of critical infrastructure and business operations.
- Information sharing regarding impacts, disruptions, or emerging threats.

Private-sector partners may engage with emergency operations through ESFs particularly ESF-2 (Communications), ESF-7 (Logistics), ESF-12 (Energy), and ESF-14 (Long-Term Community Recovery) and may be represented in the EOC when appropriate.

Collaboration with the private sector enhances local preparedness, improves operational coordination, and accelerates community recovery by integrating business continuity and economic resilience with emergency management goals.

4.4 Assignment of Responsibilities (Specific)

4.4.1 Mayor/Public Safety Director

The Mayor serves as the chief executive leader responsible for policy-level decisions, declaration of local emergencies, executive oversight of all public safety operations, and coordination of emergency authorities. The Mayor ensures government continuity, issues emergency orders, and represents the Columbus Consolidated Government in regional and state-level emergency coordination.

The Mayor under Charter Section 4-201, with consent of the Council may:

- Assume command of the police.
- Govern the consolidated government by emergency proclamation.
- Enforce emergency directives.
- Maintain order, protect life and property.

Consent may be granted through an emergency ordinance adopted under Charter Section 3-201(3).

If a State or Federal emergency is declared, the Mayor may take necessary emergency actions until Council convenes.

Additional emergency responsibilities include:

- Declaring local emergencies.

- Activating the EOP and EOC.
- Overseeing public safety agencies.
- Directing civil defense and emergency management activities.
- Coordinating executive-level emergency actions and public information.

The Muscogee County Sheriff remains a critical public safety partner but operates independently as a constitutional officer.

4.4.2 Columbus City Council (Muscogee County Commissioners)

The Columbus City Council serves as the legislative body of the Columbus Consolidated Government and provides policy direction, financial authority, and legal authorization necessary for emergency management operations.

The Council is responsible for:

Legislative and Policy Authority

- Enacting ordinances, resolutions, and emergency measures necessary to protect life, property, and the continuity of government operations.
- Approving budgets, appropriations, and emergency expenditures that support emergency management and disaster recovery.

Emergency Declarations

- Providing consent for emergency powers exercised by the Mayor under Charter Section 4-201, including assumption of command authority during emergencies if needed.
- Ratifying or extending local emergency declarations when required.

Oversight and Support

- Receiving briefings from the Mayor, City Manager, and EMA/HS Director during emergencies to maintain awareness of response and recovery efforts.
- Supporting long-term recovery, mitigation initiatives, and community resilience efforts through planning, ordinances, and resource allocation.

EOC Interface

- Designating a representative to the Executive Policy Group (EPG) during major EOC activations.
- Ensuring elected leadership remains informed regarding incident status, impacts, and resource needs.

The Council plays a critical governance role before, during, and after emergencies, ensuring the legal and financial framework needed for effective emergency operations.

4.4.3 Succession of Command

During the absence or disability of the Mayor for any reason, the Mayor Pro-Tem shall exercise all powers and perform all duties of the Mayor until the vacancy is formally filled, the Mayor returns, or the disability is removed.

If both the Mayor and the Mayor Pro-Tem are absent or unable to perform their duties, the City Council shall designate one of its members to preside and discharge the duties of the Mayor until the return or restoration of either the Mayor or Mayor Pro-Tem.

Order of Succession:

1. Mayor
2. Mayor Pro-Tem
3. Council Member Designee

4.4.4 City Manager

The City Manager is the chief administrative officer of the Columbus Consolidated Government and is responsible for ensuring the effective and efficient operation of all government departments and services. The City Manager or designee advises and assists the mayor in the execution of executive responsibilities and coordinates the activities of all administrative departments in accordance with the Columbus Charter, applicable laws, and ordinances.

With the advice and consent of the Council, the City Manager appoints and removes department heads within the administrative service of the consolidated government, consistent with Charter provisions and personnel rules.

Under the direction of the Mayor, the City Manager shall:

- Provide executive leadership and administrative oversight for all departments, offices, and agencies of the consolidated government, unless otherwise specified by law or Charter.
- Develop and manage the annual operating budget, capital budget, and capital improvement program, and submit them to the mayor for consideration.
- Prepare and publish annual reports detailing the financial status and administrative activities of the consolidated government and provide additional reports as directed by the Mayor or Council.
- Monitor and evaluate government operations, ensuring departments and agencies operate efficiently, comply with policies, and meet service standards.

- Advise the Mayor and Council on government needs, financial conditions, and strategic issues, making recommendations to improve public service delivery and long-term governance.
- Oversee the care, custody, and management of government facilities, equipment, real property, and infrastructure, ensuring they are properly maintained and operational.
- Direct the construction, maintenance, and operation of public streets, roads, bridges, drainage systems, public works, and related infrastructure.
- Coordinate and consult with department directors, including those whose responsibilities fall outside direct Council jurisdiction such as public health, Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS), and other state-aligned entities to ensure cohesive operations and alignment with community needs.
- Engage with and advise constitutional and independently elected officials, such as the Sheriff, Tax Commissioner, Clerk of Courts, and Probate Judge, on matters requiring intergovernmental coordination, funding, or administrative support.
- Conduct annual reviews of accounts, operations, and records for all boards, commissions, authorities, departments, and agencies receiving Council appropriations.
- Serve as the administrative liaison between the Mayor, the Council, and all departments, boards, commissions, and employees of the consolidated government to ensure unified government operations.
- Perform additional duties as required by law, the Charter, ordinance, or Council resolution.

4.4.5 Director, Emergency Management & Homeland Security

The Director of Emergency Management & Homeland Security (EMA/HS) serves as the chief emergency management official for Columbus–Muscogee County. The Director is nominated by the mayor, confirmed by Council, and formally appointed by the Governor of Georgia in accordance with state law. The Director leads and coordinates all aspects of emergency management for the consolidated government.

The EMA/HS Director is responsible for building and maintaining a comprehensive, all-hazards emergency management program that addresses mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. In this role, the Director collaborates with federal, state, regional, and local partners to strengthen community resilience and ensure effective emergency operations.

Under the direction of the Mayor, the EMA/HS Director shall:

Leadership & Coordination

- Serve as the primary authority for emergency management within Columbus–

Muscogee County, representing the jurisdiction in all emergency management and homeland security matters.

- Coordinate and manage all activities related to prevention, protection, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.
- Activate, manage, and oversee the operations of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).
- Facilitate interagency coordination across all departments, constitutional offices, volunteer organizations, and private-sector partners.

Planning & Preparedness

- Develop, maintain, and update all core emergency management documents, including:
 - Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)
 - Emergency Support Function (ESF) Annexes
 - Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP)
 - Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP)
 - Continuity plans and related operational documents
- Lead community preparedness activities, including public education campaigns, exercises, drills, and training for county departments and ESF agencies.

Response Operations

- Coordinate multi-agency support during emergencies and disasters; ensure resource allocation and operational priorities align with incident needs.
- Issue public warnings, notifications, and protective action guidance in coordination with the Mayor and Public Information Officer (PIO).
- Collaborate with Incident Command/Unified Command to support field operations and maintain situational awareness.
- Oversee mutual aid coordination and ensure efficient integration of outside resources.

State & Federal Coordination

- Serve as the County's primary liaison to the Georgia Emergency Management Agency and Homeland Security (GEMA/HS) and the State Operations Center (SOC).
- Submit Mission Resource Requests (MRRs), situation reports, and damage assessments to the state during incidents.

- Coordinate federal disaster assistance programs (Public Assistance, Individual Assistance, Hazard Mitigation Grants) when applicable.

Administration & Compliance

- Ensure all emergency management operations comply with NIMS/ICS and State/Federal requirements.
- Manage departmental staff, budget, grants, and administrative operations.
- Maintain records, resource inventories, and documentation necessary for disaster cost recovery.

Community Engagement & Whole-Community Inclusion

- Partner with private-sector organizations, nonprofit groups, faith-based organizations, and community leaders to strengthen whole-community preparedness.
- Promote equitable and inclusive emergency management practices for underserved and at-risk populations.

Sheltering, Protection, and Civil Defense

The EMA/HS Director is responsible for identifying, designating, and managing public shelters, protective facilities, and radiological protection sites in accordance with the Columbus Charter and the Georgia Civil Defense Act of 1951, as amended. The Director, in coordination with CCG Parks and Recreation and the American Red Cross, develops and maintains sheltering plans, issues operational guidance, and ensures that all designated shelters are properly staffed, equipped, and ready for activation during emergencies.

The EMA/HS Director reports to the Mayor and operates under the authority established in the Charter and the Georgia Civil Defense Act. All activities of the Emergency Management and Homeland Security Department shall adhere to these governing authorities.

4.4.6 Shelter Manager Authority

During shelter operations, Shelter Managers and Alternate Shelter Managers act as agents of the EMA/HS Director. They are vested with full authority to:

- Implement and enforce all directives and instructions issued by the EMA/HS Director.
- Establish and uphold rules and procedures necessary for safe, orderly shelter operations.
- Maintain discipline and ensure compliance with shelter policies.
- Take immediate protective or corrective actions necessary for the health, safety, and welfare of shelter occupants.
- Coordinate with the EOC, law enforcement, and support agencies to address

emerging needs.

Shelter Managers operate under delegated authority and are responsible for ensuring that shelter operations adhere to emergency management plans, safety protocols, and applicable laws.

4.4.7 Public Compliance

During any officially declared emergency or shelter activation, all persons in or around a designated public shelter must comply with the lawful instructions of:

- Law enforcement officers
- The Emergency Management Director
- Shelter Managers
- Alternate Shelter Managers

Failure to obey such directives during an emergency is unlawful and may result in enforcement actions consistent with local ordinance and state law.

4.4.8 Emergency Support Functions (ESFs)

Columbus–Muscogee County utilizes the Emergency Support Function (ESF) structure to organize and coordinate the capabilities of County departments, partner government agencies, private-sector organizations, and volunteer/nonprofit organizations. This functional approach mirrors the Georgia State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP) and the national ESF framework, ensuring compatibility with GEMA/HS and federal response partners.

The ESF structure provides a scalable and flexible method for delivering:

- Operational coordination
- Resource management and mission tasking
- Subject-matter expertise
- Multi-agency information sharing
- Cross-departmental problem-solving

ESFs activate partially or fully depending on incident complexity and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) activation level.

Each ESF is led by one or more Primary Agencies that serve as functional coordinators and subject-matter experts. Primary Agencies must assign trained staff capable of making operational decisions on behalf of their department when staffing the EOC. Supporting Agencies supplement these efforts by providing personnel, equipment, technical guidance, and specialized capabilities.

The ESF system ensures Columbus–Muscogee County can coordinate efficiently with internal departments while maintaining interoperability with regional, state, and federal partners.

Detailed roles and responsibilities for all ESFs are provided in the ESF Annexes of this EOP.

The following is a summary of the 15 Emergency Support Functions (ESFs):

ESF 1 Transportation: Support and assist county, private sector, and voluntary organizations requiring transportation for actual or potential emergencies or complex events.

ESF 2 Communications: Ensures the provision of communications support to county, and private-sector response efforts during emergencies or complex events.

ESF 3 Public Works and Engineering: Coordinates and organizes the capabilities and resources of the Columbus Consolidated Government and other county governments to facilitate the delivery of services, technical assistance, engineering expertise, construction management, and other support to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and/or recover from emergencies or complex events.

ESF 4 Firefighting: Enable the detection and suppression of wild-land, rural, and urban fires resulting from, or occurring coincidentally with emergencies or complex events.

ESF 5 Emergency Management Information and Planning: Responsible for information collection, analysis, planning, and coordination. Establishes and maintains situational awareness, tracks incident priorities, and supports EOC operations. Produces situation reports, incident action plans, and resource coordination.

ESF 6 Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing and Human Services: Supports County-wide, and non-governmental organization efforts to address non-medical mass care, housing, and human services needs of individuals and/or families impacted by emergencies or complex events.

ESF 7 Logistics: Supports volunteer services and County agencies in tracking, providing and/or requiring resource support before, during, and/or after emergencies or complex events.

ESF 8 Public Health & Medical Services: Provide the mechanism for coordinated county assistance to supplement resources in response to public health and medical care needs (to include veterinary and/or animal health issues when appropriate) for potential or actual emergencies or complex events and/or during a developing potential health and medical situation.

ESF 9 Search & Rescue: Rapidly deploy components of the local first responders, mutual aid response agencies, the Georgia Search and Rescue (GSAR) team, and more to provide specialized life-saving assistance during emergencies or complex events.

ESF 10 Oil and Hazardous Materials: Coordinate resources and support in response to an actual or potential discharge and/or uncontrolled release of hazardous materials during emergencies or complex events.

ESF 11 Agriculture and Natural Resources: Supports departments and other agencies' efforts to address: Provision of nutrition assistance; control and eradication of an outbreak of a highly contagious or economically devastating animal/zoonotic disease; assurance of food safety, food security, protection of natural and cultural resources and historic properties.

ESF 12 Energy: Restore damaged public utility systems and components during the potential of actual emergencies or complex events. Coordinate the restoration of utility outages in the city/county.

ESF 13 Public Safety and Security: Integrates public safety and security capabilities and resources to support the full range of incident management activities associated with potential or actual emergencies or complex events.

ESF 14 Long-Term Community Recovery: Provides a framework for county government, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector designed to enable community recovery from the long-term consequences of emergencies or complex events.

ESF 15 External Affairs: Ensures that sufficient county assets are deployed to the field during potential or actual emergencies or complex events to provide accurate, coordinated, and timely information to affected audiences, including governments, media, the private sector, and the populace.

Table 2: ESF Primary and Support Responsible Agencies

ESF	Primary Agency	Support Agencies
ESF 1 – Transportation	CCG METRA Transit System	CCG Engineering; CCG Parks & Recreation; Muscogee County School District
ESF 2 – Communications	CCG Information Technology	Columbus Police Department; Columbus Fire & EMS; Muscogee County Sheriff's Office; EMA/HS
ESF 3 – Public Works & Engineering	CCG Public Works	CCG Engineering; CCG Parks & Recreation
ESF 4 – Firefighting	Columbus Fire & EMS	Georgia Forestry Commission
ESF 5 – Emergency Management Information and Planning	EMA/HS	CCG Public Safety; CCG IT; City Attorney
ESF 6 – Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing and Human Services	American Red Cross	CCG Parks & Recreation; PAWS Humane; Columbus Health Dept.; DFCS; Region I Healthcare Coalition
ESF 7 – Logistics	Columbus Public Works	CCG Public Safety Departments
ESF 8 – Public Health & Medical	Columbus Health Dept.	Region I Healthcare Coalition; Piedmont; St. Francis Emory; Jack Hughston Hospital
ESF 9 – Search & Rescue	Columbus Fire & EMS	CCG Public Safety Departments
ESF 10 – Oil & Hazardous Materials	Columbus Fire & EMS	CHEMTREC; GDOT; GSAR; Railway Operators; GA EPD; 4th CST
ESF 11 – Agriculture & Natural Resources	Muscogee Cooperative Extension	PAWS Humane; Public Works; GA Dept. of Agriculture; Veterinarians; Columbus Health Dept.
ESF 12 – Energy	Georgia Power	Flint Energies; Diverse Power; Liberty Utilities; Columbus Water Works
ESF 13 – Public Safety & Security	Columbus Police Department	Muscogee Sheriff; CSU Police; Technical College Police; Fire & EMS; EMA/HS
ESF 14 – Long-Term Community Recovery	EMA/HS	Finance; Public Works; Engineering; Code Enforcement
ESF 15 – External Affairs	CCG PIO	EMA/HS; CCG Public Safety

5.0 Direction, Control and Coordination

5.1 Information Collection and Dissemination

Columbus–Muscogee County manages emergency operations using the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS). These systems provide a standardized, flexible, and scalable framework for coordinating resources, supporting field operations, and integrating governmental and non-governmental partners during all-hazards incidents.

NIMS ensures that responders at all levels local, state, federal, private sector, and non-profit work together effectively through common terminology, unified organizational structures, and interoperable processes.

The County's direction, control, and coordination structure supports incident response, continuity of operations, and recovery activities.

5.2 Incident Command System (ICS)

All on-scene operations within Columbus–Muscogee County are managed using ICS. The Incident Commander (IC) is responsible for establishing incident objectives, directing tactical operations, and ensuring responder safety. ICS may expand or contract based on incident complexity, operational needs, and available resources.

5.3 Unified Command

Unified Command is established when multiple agencies or jurisdictions share authority or have functional responsibilities for an incident.

Under Unified Command:

- Agencies jointly establish incident objectives.
- Strategies and priorities are collectively developed.
- A single coordinated Incident Action Plan (IAP) is produced.
- Resources are integrated and managed cooperatively.

This structure improves coordination, reduces duplication of efforts, and enhances timely decision-making.

5.4 Area Command

Area Command may be activated when multiple incident sites require coordination or when a large-scale event creates resource competition.

Area Command:

- Sets overarching priorities.
- Allocates critical resources among incidents.
- Ensures consistent strategy and information flow across locations.

5.5 Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Support

When conditions warrant, the Columbus–Muscogee County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is activated to support field Incident Command. The EOC provides:

- Situational awareness and a common operating picture
- Multi-agency coordination
- Resource prioritization and allocation
- Public information coordination
- Support for policy-level decision-making
- Continuity of government functions

The EOC does not command or control on-scene operations. Tactical control remains with the IC/UC. The EOC enables responders to focus on incident objectives while the coordination system manages support functions.

5.6 Authority to Initiate Emergency Actions

Under the Columbus Consolidated Government Charter and Georgia emergency management statutes, the Mayor has the authority to declare a Local State of Emergency.

A local declaration:

- Activates the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP).
- Grants emergency powers needed to protect life and property.
- Authorizes the mobilization of County resources.
- Supports requests for state and federal assistance.

A declaration may be recommended by the City Manager, Public Safety leadership, or the EMA/HS Director based on situational conditions.

5.7 Executive Policy Group (EPG)

During complex or high-consequence incidents, an Executive Policy Group (EPG) may convene to provide strategic oversight and policy guidance. The EPG may include senior elected and appointed officials necessary to address jurisdiction-wide issues.

EPG responsibilities include:

- Clarifying policy, legal, or jurisdictional issues.
- Providing executive decisions needed for resource prioritization.
- Supporting continuity of government and recovery planning.
- Ensuring that response and recovery operations align with community priorities.

The EPG does not engage in tactical decision-making or direct field operations.

5.8 Activation of the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)

The EOP may be activated by the:

- Mayor
- City Manager
- Emergency Management & Homeland Security Director
- Authorized designee

Activation levels and staffing are scalable and based on:

- Incident complexity
- Anticipated resource requirements
- Impacts on public safety and critical infrastructure
- Coordination needs among multiple agencies

The EOP may also be activated when the Governor issues a State of Emergency or when national emergencies affect Columbus–Muscogee County.

5.9 Multi-Jurisdictional and Multi-Agency Coordination

Columbus–Muscogee County maintains coordinated emergency operations with:

- Neighboring city and county jurisdictions
- Regional partners

- State agencies, including GEMA/HS
- Federal agencies (through the State)
- Public utilities and private infrastructure owners
- Non-profit and volunteer organizations

NIMS Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) principles guide the integration of these partners in both field and EOC operations. Information sharing, resource requests, and situational reporting follow standardized processes to ensure operational consistency.

5.10 Coordination with Non-Governmental and Volunteer Organizations

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), volunteer agencies, and faith-based groups are essential components of the County's emergency management system. These organizations may support:

- Mass care and sheltering
- Feeding operations
- Donations and volunteer management
- Behavioral health and spiritual care
- Long-term recovery and human services

NGOs may be incorporated into EOC operations through liaison roles or functional group assignments. Their activities are coordinated to ensure consistency with operational objectives and responder safety.

5.11 Coordination with the Private Sector

Private-sector organizations including critical infrastructure operators, utility providers, healthcare facilities, and major employers play a vital role in emergency response and recovery. These organizations may assist with:

- Infrastructure restoration
- Business continuity and economic stabilization
- Technical expertise and logistic support
- Information sharing and impact assessment

Private-sector representatives may participate directly in EOC operations or provide information and resources through designated liaison channels.

5.12 Assistance and Resource Requests

If local resources become insufficient to meet operational needs, Columbus–Muscogee County may request assistance through established NIMS resource management processes. Requests may include:

- Mutual aid from neighboring jurisdictions
- State support through GEMA/HS
- Federal assistance (upon State request)

All resource requests, tracking, and demobilization actions follow standardized NIMS resource management procedures to maintain accountability, expedite delivery, and support reimbursement and cost recovery.

5.13 Logistical Staging Areas

During large-scale emergencies or incidents requiring substantial mobilization of resources, Columbus–Muscogee County may establish one or more Logistical Staging Areas (LSAs) to support the receipt, processing, and distribution of critical supplies, equipment, and personnel. LSAs serve as centralized hubs that ensure resources are efficiently organized and deployed to affected areas.

LSAs will be activated and managed in coordination with the EOC Logistics Section (ESF-7) and may support operations before, during, and after the emergency.

Functions of an LSA include:

- Receiving, sorting, and inventorying incoming emergency relief and sustainment supplies
- Staging and tracking equipment, personnel, and transportation assets
- Coordinating distribution to Incident Command Posts, Points of Distribution (PODs), shelters, and other operational sites
- Supporting mutual aid and state or federal resource deployments
- Ensuring accountability, documentation, and demobilization of all resources processed through the site

5.13.1 LSA Site Selection

Locations for LSAs will be determined based on proximity to impacted areas, accessibility, facility capacity, and safety considerations. Potential pre-identified locations may be included in the Resource & Logistics Annex, and additional sites may be designated as incident conditions evolve.

LSA operations will follow NIMS logistics principles and integrate with state and federal staging operations when coordinated through GEMA/HS.

5.14 Continuity of Operations and Government

When normal governmental functions are disrupted, County departments may activate Continuity of Operations (COOP) procedures to maintain essential functions. COOP measures include:

- Orders of succession and delegations of authority
- Alternate work locations and telework capabilities
- Protection of vital records and systems
- Restoration and reconstitution planning

Continuity of Government (COG) ensures that elected leadership remains able to exercise legal authority during and after emergency conditions.

6.0 Information Collection, Analysis and Dissemination

Effective information management is essential for maintaining situational awareness, supporting coordinated decision-making, and developing a unified operational picture during emergencies. Columbus–Muscogee County employs NIMS principles and established communication systems to ensure accurate, timely, and actionable information flow across all emergency response organizations.

6.1 WebEOC Information Management

Columbus–Muscogee County uses WebEOC as its primary information management tool during emergency operations. WebEOC provides a secure, web-based platform that enables real-time information sharing, resource tracking, and situational awareness across all responding agencies and ESFs.

WebEOC use and responsibilities:

- The EOC Planning Section is responsible for posting all official reports, updating incident status boards, and maintaining situational awareness tools within WebEOC.
- All resource requests (MRRs) must be entered into WebEOC to ensure proper documentation, tracking, and accountability.
- Resource requests submitted in WebEOC will be:
 - Routed to the appropriate ESF for local action or
 - Forwarded to GEMA/HS when local capability is exceeded.
- Authorized users across County departments and partner agencies may view and update incident-specific information as appropriate to their roles.

WebEOC serves as the system of record for situational reporting and resource coordination during EOC activations.

6.2 Essential Elements of Information (EEI)

Essential Elements of Information (EEI) support consistent information gathering and analysis across all ESFs and EOC positions. EEIs help staff identify critical information needed to develop and maintain a common operating picture and anticipate future operational challenges.

- Each EOC position and ESF should use position-specific job aids that contain EEI checklists to guide data collection and reporting.
- EEIs feed directly into SITREPs, operational briefings, incident forecasting, and decision-making processes.

- EEI inputs also populate situational awareness boards within WebEOC to ensure uniform visibility across all activated partners.

EEIs ensure that Columbus–Muscogee County maintains a proactive, forward-looking operational posture during emergencies.

6.3 Situation Reports (SITREP)

When the Columbus–Muscogee County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is activated, a Situation Report (SITREP) will be produced for each operational period to maintain situational awareness and support coordinated decision-making. The EMA/HS Director, or designee, will establish the operational period, which typically follows a 12–24-hour cycle, unless incident conditions require adjustment.

SITREPs will be produced consistently with NIMS guidance and GEMA/HS reporting expectations. Columbus–Muscogee County has established an internal standard of producing the initial SITREP within four (4) hours of EOC activation, followed by SITREPs at the start of each operational period.

SITREP Requirements:

- The initial SITREP should be completed within the first four (4) hours of EOC activation.
- Ongoing SITREPs will be produced at the start of each operational period and should align with scheduled EOC briefings.
- SITREPs must summarize:
 - Current incident status
 - Significant events and operational impacts
 - Resource needs and shortfalls
 - Actions taken by ESFs
 - Anticipated priorities for the next operational period

SITREPs will be entered into WebEOC under the County Situation Report board and transmitted to the State Operations Center (SOC) in accordance with GEMA/HS procedures.

Resource Request Clarification

SITREPs do not replace the requirement to submit formal Mission Resource Requests (MRRs) for any assistance beyond local capability. All requests for state or federal support must still be submitted through WebEOC using the MRR process.

6.4 Briefing Schedule and Procedures

Briefings ensure a shared understanding of the incident, operational objectives, and resource needs. Briefings will be coordinated by the EMA/HS Director or the EOC Manager.

6.4.1 Activation Briefing

Immediately after activation, the EOC Director (or designee) will conduct an Activation Briefing that includes:

- Summary of the incident and initial situational overview
- Declaration status (local, state, federal, if applicable)
- Operational period designation
- Initial objectives and priorities
- Key facility and safety information

6.4.2 Operational Period Briefings

Once the EOC is fully operational:

- The EOC Director will conduct regularly scheduled situational briefings at times established during the initial operational period.
- Briefing frequency will be based on incident complexity, operational tempo, and information needs.
- All ESFs may be required to provide:
 - Status updates
 - Priority issues and constraints
 - Significant accomplishments
 - Emerging concerns or unmet needs related to their functional area

These briefings support unified decision-making and inform SITREP development.

6.4.3 Special or Supplemental Briefings

Additional briefings may be held as necessary and may include, but are not limited to:

- Briefings for elected officials, the Executive Policy Group (EPG), or department leadership
- Briefings for state or federal representatives (e.g., GEMA/HS, FEMA)
- Joint Information Center (JIC) briefings for Public Information Officers

- Visits from VIPs or partner agencies
- Transition briefings between operational periods or staffing shifts

7.0 Communications

Effective communications are essential for coordinated incident management. Columbus–Muscogee County follows the National Incident Management System (NIMS) principles for information management and public information coordination. Public messaging, alerts, and warnings must be timely, accurate, accessible, and consistent across all responding agencies, jurisdictions, and partner organizations. To achieve this, the County maintains systems, structures, plans, policies, and interoperable communications capabilities that support operational coordination and public engagement during emergencies.

7.1 Joint Information System (JIS)

The Joint Information System (JIS) provides the framework for organizing, integrating, and coordinating public information during emergencies. The JIS ensures that messaging is synchronized across jurisdictions, disciplines, non-governmental organizations, and private-sector partners.

Through the JIS, Columbus–Muscogee County ensures:

- Public Information Officer (PIO) functions are coordinated and integrated among all responding entities.
- A structured system exists for developing, reviewing, and delivering consistent, interagency public messages.
- Public information plans, strategies, and recommendations are developed and executed in support of incident management objectives.
- Leadership is advised regarding media relations, public sentiment, rumor control, misinformation, and potential impacts to public confidence.

The JIS enhances the County’s ability to maintain transparency, support public safety actions, and reinforce trust during large-scale incidents. Local PIOs, partner agencies, and Joint Information Centers (JICs) all operate within this structure.

7.2 Joint Information Center (JIC)

A Joint Information Center (JIC) may be activated to serve as the operational hub for public information activities.

The JIC provides:

- A centralized physical or virtual location for coordinating and managing public information functions within the JIS.

- Workspaces for PIOs from multiple agencies to collaborate on messaging, crisis communications, media management, and public affairs activities.
- A unified environment for developing, approving, and disseminating emergency information and protective action guidance.

Depending on incident needs, the JIC may operate onsite, near the EOC, or virtually to ensure effective coordination across all involved partners

7.3 Public Alerting and Notifications

During emergencies, ESF-15 External Affairs/Public Information is responsible for the dissemination of warnings, protective action guidance, and public information. PIOs ensure that emergency messages are:

- Timely and accurate
- Clear and accessible to all populations, including those with functional and access needs
- Coordinated across participating agencies and jurisdictions
- Distributed through multiple communication channels

Messaging may be coordinated among:

- Columbus Consolidated Government departments
- Municipal partners within Columbus-Muscogee County
- Public safety agencies
- Non-governmental and volunteer organizations
- Private-sector entities

Public alerts may be disseminated using systems such as mass notification platforms, media briefings, social media, the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA), and other communication tools.

7.4 EOC Communications Systems

The Columbus–Muscogee County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) maintains multiple, redundant communication systems to ensure resilient information flow during emergencies. These systems support situational awareness, resource coordination, operational communications, and alert and warning activities.

Current EOC communication capabilities include, but are not limited to:

- WebEOC (primary information management and situational awareness platform)
- Landline telephones
- Cellular phones and mobile devices
- Satellite phones for off-grid communication
- Government radio systems (public safety interoperability channels, amateur radio as applicable)
- Internet-enabled computers and secure networks
- Emergency Alert System (EAS) connectivity (IPAWS)
- Video conferencing and virtual collaboration tools (MS TEAMS)
- Fax and legacy systems, maintained for redundancy

Communications systems are regularly reviewed, tested, and updated to maintain interoperability and reliability across agencies and partner organizations.

8.0 Administration, Finance, and Logistics

Effective administration, financial management, and logistical support are essential to ensuring that Columbus–Muscogee County can respond to and recover from emergencies in a coordinated, efficient, and compliant manner. All activities under this section support adherence to applicable federal, state, and local requirements, including NIMS, GEMA/HS regulations, and relevant Columbus Consolidated Government (CCG) policies.

8.1 Documentation

Accurate and complete documentation is required to support operational continuity, financial reimbursement, legal compliance, after-action reporting, and future mitigation planning. Columbus–Muscogee County departments and partner agencies must maintain detailed records of all activities undertaken during incident response and recovery.

8.1.1 General Documentation Requirements

- Each department/agency is responsible for collecting, maintaining, and securing documentation related to its response and recovery activities, in accordance with:
 - Internal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
 - Columbus Consolidated Government (CCG) policies
 - GEMA/HS reporting requirements
 - FEMA Public Assistance (PA) documentation standards (if applicable).
- Documentation may include but is not limited to:
 - Incident logs and activity records
 - ICS forms (e.g., ICS-214 Unit Log)
 - Situation Reports (SITREPs)
 - Mission tasking records
 - Resource Requests
 - Personnel and equipment usage records
 - Damage assessments
 - After Action Reports and Improvement Plans (AAR/IPs)

8.1.2 WebEOC Usage

Columbus–Muscogee County uses WebEOC as its primary incident information management platform.

- The Planning Section is responsible for maintaining Situation Reports, status boards, and documentation entered into WebEOC.
- All ESFs and agencies must update WebEOC as required to maintain a common operating picture.
- WebEOC data serves as the authoritative record for multi-agency coordination and may support cost recovery and state reporting.

8.2 Finance

Financial accountability during emergencies ensures compliance with county policy, state guidelines, and federal reimbursement requirements.

8.2.1 Department/Agency Responsibilities

Each department/agency must:

- Track all costs incurred during response and recovery operations, including:
 - Personnel overtime and backfill
 - Equipment usage and fuel
 - Emergency procurement and purchasing
 - Rentals, contracts, and mutual aid expenses
 - Shelter and mass-care related expenditures
- Maintain records in accordance with:
 - Columbus Consolidated Government Finance Department policies
 - Department/agency internal SOPs
 - Georgia Open Records requirements
 - FEMA Public Assistance and Individual Assistance program documentation standards when federal reimbursement is anticipated

8.2.2 Support from CCG Finance Department

The Finance Department may provide:

- Guidance on emergency procurement.
- Assistance with cost-tracking templates and audit preparation.
- Verification of documentation prior to GEMA/HS or FEMA submission.

All departments and agencies must retain financial and operational documentation related to emergency response and recovery in compliance with 2 CFR §200, GEMA/HS guidance, and Columbus Consolidated Government (CCG) record retention policies. Records must be retained for no less than three (3) years, and for a longer period if necessary to complete audits, address appeals, resolve litigation, or support state and federal grant closeout processes. Departments are responsible for maintaining records until all reimbursement, audit, and compliance requirements are fully satisfied.

8.3 Logistics

Logistics management ensures that personnel, supplies, equipment, and services required for emergency operations are obtained, tracked, delivered, and demobilized efficiently.

8.3.1 Resource Request Process

Resource requests follow NIMS and GEMA/HS procedures:

- **Originating Entity:**
 - Departments identify resource needs and submit requests to the EOC (usually through WebEOC).
- **EOC Coordination:**
 - The EOC Logistics Section (ESF-7) attempts to fulfill resource needs using local government assets or mutual aid resources.
- **Escalation to State:**
 - If needs cannot be met locally, the EOC submits a Mission Resource Request (MRR) to GEMA/HS through WebEOC.
- **Federal Support (If required):**
 - If state resources are insufficient, GEMA/HS may request federal assistance.

8.3.2 Resource Tracking

- All deployed resources must be tracked to ensure accountability, cost documentation, and proper demobilization.
- WebEOC serves as the county's primary tool for tracking requests, missions, and resource status.

8.3.3 Resource Maintenance

Proper maintenance is necessary throughout all phases of deployment:

- **Pre-deployment:** Ensure equipment readiness and availability

- **Operational:** Maintain functionality (e.g., fueling, repairs, rest cycles for personnel)
- **Post-deployment:** Conduct inspection, service, and return-to-stock procedures

8.3.4 Logistical Staging Areas

When large-scale mobilization is required, Columbus–Muscogee County may activate Logistical Staging Areas (LSAs) to receive, sort, and distribute incoming resources. LSA operations are managed under ESF-7 and follow NIMS logistics protocols.

8.4 Grants and Reimbursement

Following an eligible emergency or disaster declaration:

- GEMA/HS and FEMA may provide reimbursement for eligible costs.
- Departments must follow documentation requirements precisely to ensure reimbursement.
- The Emergency Management & Homeland Security Department, in coordination with Finance, assists with:
 - Grant application guidance
 - Documentation submission
 - Audit preparation

9.0 Plan Development and Maintenance

The Columbus–Muscogee County Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) is a dynamic document that must evolve as policies, capabilities, hazards, and organizational structures change. This section outlines the governance, responsibilities, and procedures for the development, review, revision, and maintenance of the EOP and all associated annexes.

9.1 Plan Development

9.1.1 Responsibility for EOP Development

The Emergency Management & Homeland Security (EMA/HS) Director is the lead authority responsible for the development, coordination, and overall management of the Columbus–Muscogee County EOP.

The Director ensures that the plan aligns with:

- Columbus Consolidated Government policies and authorities
- Georgia Emergency Management Agency and Homeland Security guidance
- National Incident Management System standards
- Federal Emergency Management Agency planning doctrine

9.1.2 ESF Agency Participation

Each Emergency Support Function (ESF) Primary Agency is responsible for contributing to and supporting the development of the EOP. This includes drafting, updating, and validating ESF Annexes and providing capability-specific data, resource listings, and operational procedures.

9.1.3 Whole-Community Engagement

When applicable, the EOP development process will incorporate input from:

- Supporting agencies
- Non-governmental and volunteer organizations
- Private sector partners
- Regional and state emergency management collaborators

This approach supports Columbus–Muscogee County’s commitment to inclusive, whole-community planning.

9.2 Plan Maintenance

Columbus–Muscogee County Emergency Management & Homeland Security serves as the executive agent for the maintenance of the EOP and all supporting annexes. The

EOP will be reviewed annually and formally updated at least every three (3) years, or sooner if required by directive or operational need.

The EMA/HS Director will coordinate all maintenance activities in collaboration with ESF leads, supporting agencies, and operational stakeholders.

9.2.1 Requirements for Updating the EOP

Changes should be made to the EOP and annexes when the documents are no longer current. Reasons to review and update a plan may include, but are not limited to:

- a. A major incident
- b. The impacts of an incident based on an exercise or after actions review (AAR)
- c. Change in operational resources or elected officials
- d. Change in the concept of operations for emergencies
- e. Change in warning and communications systems
- f. Change in hazards or threats
- g. Updated planning standards or guidance
- h. New and/or amended laws
- i. Grammatical errors or programmatic changes

The EMA/HS Director will ensure distribution of revisions to all organizations listed on the EOP Distribution List.

Agency Responsibilities:

- Primary and supporting agencies must maintain internal plans, SOPs, checklists, and resource inventories that support the EOP.
- Agencies must notify EMA/HS of relevant changes to personnel, resources, or capabilities to support timely updates.

9.2.2 Review and Update Procedures

9.2.2.1 Review Requirements

The EOP and all annexes will undergo an annual review. Each review will result in one of three findings:

No Action Required

- Contents remain accurate and current.
- The section receives an automatic 12-month extension.

Partial Update Required (Administrative Update)

- Minor edits or corrections are needed (e.g., names, titles, contact information).
- Does not change the plan's operational intent.
- Documented in the Record of Change log; approval date remains unchanged.

Full Update Required (Operational or Organizational Change)

- Significant adjustments are required (concept of operations, responsibilities, resource changes, authorities).
- Requires full stakeholder engagement, formal review, and signature by approving authorities.

9.2.2.2 Update Procedures

Partial Update

- Administrative or minor revisions
- Does not alter the purpose, structure, or operational components
- Added to the EOP's "Record of Change"
- Distributed to all recipients via the EOP Distribution List
- Does not reset the plan's approval date

Full Update

- Required at least every three (3) years from the promulgation date
- Requires the formal FEMA/GEMA aligned planning process, including:
 - Stakeholder involvement
 - Content review and comment
 - Integration of new policies or guidance
- Results in full reissuance of the plan with updated signatures and distribution

Rescinding Outdated Sections

Sections of the EOP or annexes that have become obsolete may be recommended for rescission.

Rescission requires:

- Recommendation by the EMA/HS Director
- Consultation with the Mayor or authorized executive leadership
- Formal notification to all plan stakeholders
- Removal from the active EOP inventory

9.3 Plan Distribution and Access

Upon approval, the EOP and annexes will be distributed electronically to all agencies and organizations listed in the Distribution List. WebEOC or other approved systems may be used to maintain current versions and provide controlled access.

10.0 Authorities and References

10.1 Legal Authority

10.1.1 Federal

- Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 93-288, as amended, codified at 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121
- Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended, 6 U.S.C. § 101 et seq.
- Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (PKEMRA), Title VI of Public Law 109-295
- Volunteer Protection Act of 1997, 42 U.S.C. Chapter 139
- Applicable portions of Title 44, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), including but not limited to:
 - Mitigation planning requirements, 44 CFR Part 201
 - Federal disaster assistance for state and local governments, 44 CFR Part 206

10.1.2 State

- Georgia Emergency Management Act of 1981, as amended, O.C.G.A. Title 38, Chapter 3, O.C.G.A. § 38-3-20 through § 38-3-38, O.C.G.A. § 38-3-27 O.C.G.A. § 38-3-51
- Liability of Persons or Entities Acting to Prevent, Minimize, and Repair Injury and Damage Resulting from Catastrophic Acts of Nature, O.C.G.A. § 51-1-29.2
- Georgia Emergency Management Agency–Homeland Security Statewide Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement
- GEMA/HS Mutual Aid Operations Standard Operating Guide (SOG) (2022)

10.1.3 Local

- Charter of Columbus, Georgia (Columbus Consolidated Government)
 - Sec. 3-201(3)
 - Article IV – Executive Branch
- Columbus Code of Ordinances, Chapter 2 – Administration
 - Article III – Emergency Management
 - Article IV – Continuity of Government in Emergency
- Columbus Code of Ordinances, Chapter 11 – Fire Protection

- Article VI – Department of Emergency Management (Sections 11-47 through 11-51)
- Local ordinances and resolutions adopting and implementing the Georgia Statewide Mutual Aid and Assistance Agreement and related memoranda of understanding (MOUs) or intergovernmental agreements.

10.2 References

10.2.1 Federal

- Comprehensive Preparedness Guide (CPG) 101: Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans, FEMA, Version 3.1 (2025)
- National Incident Management System (NIMS), Third Edition (October 2017)
- National Response Framework (NRF), Fourth Edition
- Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) Doctrine, 2020 Revision
- National Planning Frameworks and National Preparedness Goal, FEMA/DHS

10.2.2 State

- Georgia Emergency Operations Plan (GEOP)
- Georgia Emergency Management Agency and Homeland Security (GEMA/HS) ESF Templates and Plan Standardization
- GEMA/HS Mutual Aid Operations Standard Operating Guide (SOG)
- Georgia Statewide Mutual Aid and Assistance
- State of Georgia Continuity of Government and Continuity of Operations

10.2.3 Local

- Columbus Code of Ordinances
- Columbus–Muscogee County Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Muscogee County Local Emergency Operations Plan (LEOP)
- Columbus–Muscogee County Continuity of Government (COG) Plan
- Department-level Continuity of Operations Plans (COOPs)
- Any current mutual/automatic aid agreements, memoranda of understanding (MOUs), or intergovernmental agreements adopted by Columbus–Muscogee County that relate to emergency management, public safety, or emergency services.

TAB A: Acronyms

CCG	Columbus Consolidated Government	JIC	Joint Information Center
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations	JIS	Joint Information System
CPG	Comprehensive Preparedness Guide	LEOP	Local Emergency Operations Plan
CST	Civil Support Team	LSA	Logistical Staging Area
CSU	Columbus State University	MCSD	Muscogee County School District
DFCS	Department of Family and Children Services	MRR	Mission Resource Request
DRP	Disaster Recovery Plan	MCV	Mobile Command Vehicle
EM	Emergency Management	NIMS	National Incident Management System
EMA/HS	Emergency Management & Homeland Security	NRF	National Response Framework
EMPG	Emergency Management Performance Grants	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
EOC	Emergency Operations Center	PA	Public Assistance Program
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan	PIO	Public Information Officer
GA EPD	Georgia Environmental Protection Division	POD	Point of Distribution
ESF	Emergency Support Function	SAR	Search and Rescue
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency	SITREP	Situation Report
GEMA/HS	Georgia Emergency Management & Homeland Security Agency	SOG	Standard Operating Guide
GSAR	Georgia Search and Rescue	SOC	State Operations Center
HHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	SOP	Standard Operating Procedure

HMP	Hazard Mitigation Plan	THIRA	Threat & Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment
HMGP	Hazard Mitigation Grant Program	UC	Unified Command
ICS	Incident Command System	WEA	Wireless Emergency Alerts
IDA	Initial Damage Assessment	WebEOC	Web-Based Emergency Operations Center System
IAP	Incident Action Plan		