



# CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS FOR RADIO COMMUNICATIONS

ANTHEM PLANNING

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# 01

## UNDERSTAND YOUR ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

When first responders list their must-haves for continuity planning, emergency communications capabilities are always at the top. If you run a department responsible for maintaining a radio system, defining your own essential functions is integral to supporting first responders. Use this guide to plan for continuous and reliable communications in the face of disaster.

A critical first step is understanding your essential functions. These are functions that must be in place and cannot be delayed until an emergency has ceased. For radio communications shops, this might mean prioritizing system maintenance over an upgrade but, much of what is done IS essential.

Essential functions might be:

- Provide continuous, reliable communications
- Maintain in-use equipment
- Maintain and supply equipment stockpiles

# 02

## PLAN FOR PERSONNEL ABSENCES

Early in the COOP process your organization must identify key leadership positions and those positions responsible for the decisions that impact radio communications. Consider:

- Who is active in the decision making process?
- How is their authority delegated if key decision makers are inaccessible or unable to work?
- What policies, statutes or laws guide the decision making process and the delegation process?

You must also consider what staff members carry out essential functions and plan for their absence. Cross-training and diverse competencies are critical to ensuring that communications stay up for first responders. Ensuring operational readiness through cross training is the best way to address personnel absences.

## 03

### RESEARCH YOUR INTERDEPENDENCIES

Modern day radio systems need to do more than just provide radio coverage to first responders. Today's radio system provides GPS location data to CAD systems, interfaces with nearby radio systems of different technologies, provides backhaul for IT data, manages access controls or alarm systems and any number of other functions. It is important that all components of the radio system and its dependent technologies function correctly and efficiently together in order to avoid a cascade of failures which can disrupt or halt operations and endanger lives. Luckily there are a few simple steps organizations can follow to eliminate much of the risk found in interdependent systems:

- Ensure system documentation is up to date and accurate
- Maintain sharing agreements that specify the solution used with interoperability partners
- Eliminate single points of failure by establishing failover solutions
- Keep maintenance agreements in place for the radio system and all systems that rely on it and ensure that response plans meet your needs

## 04

### PRACTICE RISK MITIGATION

You can act now to mitigate risks to availability and system integrity.

- Conduct a review of prior risk assessments and ensure that identified gaps have been met with action
- Ensure security requirements are met with up to date versions of software and hardware and that personnel are trained
- Screen employees before hiring and ensure contractors have a screening process in place.
- Assess preventative maintenance schedules and ensure back-up power source and alternate systems are tested
- Consider access controls at sites, dispatch centers, and server rooms.



## 05 TRAIN ON AND EXERCISE COOP PROCEDURES

**Proficiency in COOP follows the Train-Test-Exercise approach. It is insufficient to have a COOP plan; leadership and staff must understand it and determine its functionality in testing and exercise environments.**

**Here are a few ideas:**

- Feature COOP training quarterly
- Work with your emergency management personnel to incorporate radio communications events in functional and full-scale exercises
- Document and review your lessons learned, incorporate them into policy revisions



## 06 RESOURCES

### Contact Anthem's COOP Experts



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### FEMA's Continuity Resource Toolkit

<https://www.fema.gov/continuity-resource-toolkit>

### FEMA's Continuity Assessment Tool

<https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/158679>