Division *of* Administrative Services

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
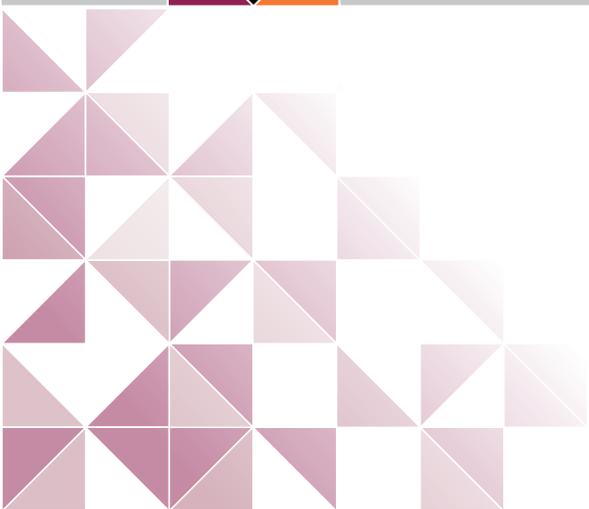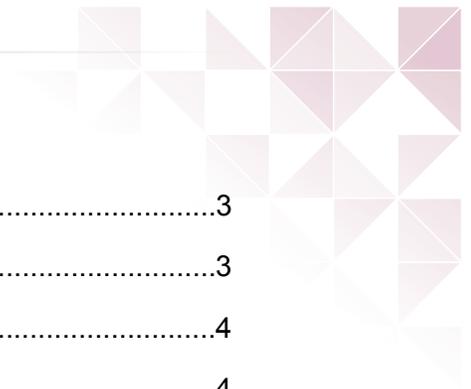
Continuity of Operations Plan

Development Guide

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VirginiaTech

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INTRODUCTION

A departmental Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP) is designed to provide guidance for sustaining departmental essential functions in response to an emergency incident. The COOP addresses the following disruptions to normal operations:

- ▸ Loss of a facility, or portion of a facility;

- ▸ Loss of services due to a reduction in workforce; and

- ▸ Loss of services due to equipment or utilities failure.

Any actions taken immediately before or during an incident should follow guidance from the department's Emergency Action Plan. The COOP is intended to minimize the impact on Essential Functions during recovery operations.

This guide is intended for use in developing or strengthening your department's COOP. Incidents may occur at any time, and while you are unable to control when or where they happen, you can manage or limit the impact to your department's Essential Functions by maintaining an effective COOP. Additionally, a comprehensive COOP can serve to speed the recovery process through strategic focus on department Essential Functions.

The COOP development process begins with identifying the appropriate stakeholders for the department. These stakeholders then develop a list of Essential Functions specific to the department. Next, the COOP coordinator works to define the Essential Functions, critical assets, and a risk profile. After completion of the Essential Functions documentation, the COOP coordinator leads the development of the COOP Narrative, which addresses maintaining and recovering department Essential Functions.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The three most important planning considerations are: loss of your facility, or part of your facility; a significant decrease in available staffing, or the loss of utilities and records (including important files, documents, and records necessary to maintain your business operations). These types of loss can directly, and significantly, impact the department's ability to carry on its mission. The purpose of the Continuity of Operations Plan is to strategically identify and support key business processes or Essential Functions, and define the roles of those tasked with incident-recovery and restoration of departmental functionality.

Research is an integral component of the mission of Virginia Tech. During the COOP planning process, it is important to consider departmental research within the context of Essential Functions. Research is often reliant on specialized utilities, core support facilities, hazardous materials, and technically-skilled personnel. Incidents impacting any of these elements poses risk of disruptions to on-going research, and protracted incidents may lead to irreparable damages to equipment, infrastructure, unique collections of samples and specimens, and loss of intellectual property. See "Essential Functions" (page 4) for additional guidance on the development of Essential Functions, and considerations for teaching, research, and business operations.
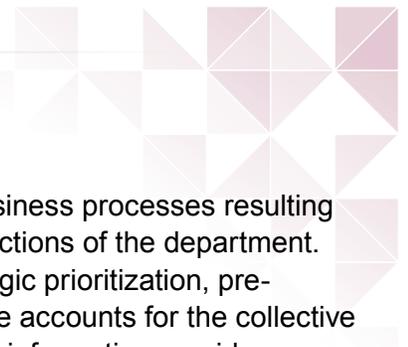
COMPONENTS OF THE COOP

Essential Functions are the foundation of the COOP. The strategic evaluation of business processes resulting in identification of select services and the critical assets of each define the core functions of the department. These resulting Essential Functions, then drive the recovery process through strategic prioritization, pre-defined logistical needs, and pre-determined points of contact. The COOP Narrative accounts for the collective Essential Functions, and provides for more global recovery guidance. The following information provides section by section guidance on completing your department's plan.

To develop a strong COOP, the department Essential Functions should be defined, and associated documentation completed, prior to the development of the COOP Narrative. The Essential Function documentation includes: the essential function description; key personnel; critical resources; vital files, records, and databases; external contacts and vendors, and risk assessment. The COOP Narrative will identify and address the following departmental specific information: Department Description, Orders of Succession, Delegations of Authority, Alert and Notification Methods, Vital Record, Systems, and Equipment, Specific Facility Requirements, Implementation Procedure Checklist, and Personnel Contact List.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS

Essential functions are defined as services, programs, or activities which may not sustain an interruption greater than 30 days in order for the department to continue operating at normal status. Not all Essential Functions may be disrupted as a result of a given incident; however, consideration and evaluation of each will define the strategic goals of the department with respect to recovery operations.

Some examples of departmental Essential Functions are:

- ▸ Academic Advising
- ▸ Academic Instruction
- ▸ Basic Utilities (e.g. sewer, water, electricity)
- ▸ Budget and Finance Administration
- ▸ Facility Operations
- ▸ IT Services
- ▸ Research (e.g., Operations, Data Collection, Animal Care

Documenting Essential Functions is done within the Virginia Tech Office of Emergency Management Planning Portal. Each Essential Function will require the following information:

1. **Essential Function Description**

- ▸ Included with the description, the department will need to identify the priority of the essential function, the frequency in which the essential function is part of operations, recovery time objective, and manual interim process for the essential function.

- ▶ Recovery time objective should be used to help prioritize each essential function. We understand that all Essential Functions are important to a department, however, in the recovery process following an incident when Essential Functions are prioritized this will help establish a plan to focus on the functions that are most important.

2. Key Personnel

- ▶ Identify the personnel that would be involved with the implementation of the COOP for the department.

3. Critical Resources

- ▶ Identify the type of resource(s) that would be needed for the essential function. Resources may include equipment, facilities, people, supplies, and other specialized services.

4. Vital Files, Records, and Databases

- ▶ Identify the methods used to store the department's data for each essential function.

5. External Contacts and Vendors

- ▶ Identify external resources critical to the department's essential function.

6. Risk Assessment

- ▶ Completing this section will evaluate probabilities of potential disruptions, and associated consequences to your department's Essential Functions. This will help your department better understand risks and vulnerabilities to its Essential Functions and supporting resources.

COOP NARRATIVE

1. Department Description

- ▶ Insert the mission statement of the department or business unit. This is an opportunity to identify the purpose for the organizational unit, which also serves to define operational norm laying a foundation for recovery post-incident.

2. Orders of Succession

- ▶ Consider the need to plan for succession in positions other than the director, department head, or dean. Positions such as facility managers, researchers, administrative, etc. that serve Essential Functions, should be considered in your COOP development.

3. Delegations of Authority

- ▶ Identification, by position, the authorities for making policy determinations and decisions at all departmental locations.

▶ Some examples of delegations of authority include; COOP activation, signatory, contract or grant commitments, regulatory obligations, and financial obligations. The template provides for defining and limiting any delegation of authority. For instance, financial delegation may include a limit to the funding that may be committed.

4. Alert and Notification Methods

▶ Identify the mechanisms used by the department to communicate pertinent information internally among employees. How does your department plan to notify all members of the department post-incident of what actions they should take (e.g., report to alternate location, or employees work from home)?

5. Vital Record, Systems, and Equipment

▶ An effective COOP documents the processes providing for redundancy of key information, necessary to maintain Essential Functions. Identify the vital records, systems, and equipment which support each essential function for your department. Consideration should be given to the function both upstream and downstream. Otherwise stated, consider how you interface with providers of the system/information and also those who may access your information/system. When developing this section of the COOP, the plan should also consider the department needs for backing-up data, records, and other information independent of central IT services.

6. Departmental Specific Facility Requirements

▶ The university is unable to designate an alternate facility for each unit due to fiscal and resource availability constraints. In order to assist in the relocation should it become necessary, departments should detail space requirements to sustain the unit's Essential Function performance in this section. Details should include approximate square footage or specialized rooms and/or laboratories that may be needed to continue the department's Essential Functions.

7. Annex A- Implementation Procedures Checklist

▶ In this section, the COOP Coordinator should assign tasks to individuals and positions. Typically, position titles are preferred over individual names. You may assign specific people to the identified tasks prior to an incident; however, please keep in mind that someone else may need to be assigned to the specific task if the primary assignee is not available. Alternatively, you may use Annex A at the time of notification to assign available individuals to the necessary tasks. Not all tasks will necessarily apply for a COOP activation and thus does not need to be assigned to any specific individual or position.

8. Annex B- Communications Plan

▶ The Communications Plan should contain key personnel from the department that would be essential to the implementation of the COOP. Typically, the implementation of the COOP, requires a subset of employees serving key roles, thus not all need to be listed in the plan. It is recommended that departments keep a full list of employees separately.

ACCESSING YOUR DEPARTMENT'S COOP

COOPs are accessed through the Virginia Tech Office of Emergency Management Planning Portal. All Departmental COOPs are maintained in a SharePoint data base.

The department's plan is available only to those individuals granted access by OEM. In addition to storing the COOP on the Virginia Tech Office of Emergency Management Planning Portal, departments should maintain an electronic and hard copies of their COOP.

For instructional guidance on how to navigate the Virginia Tech Office of Emergency Management Planning Portal, please see VT OEM COOP Portal Instructional Guide document located in the planning portal or at http://emergency.vt.edu/plans/COOPs.html.

DISTRIBUTION OF YOUR DEPARTMENT'S COOP

There is no requirement that the departmental Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) be shared with the entire department or published for public review. This document should be shared on a restricted basis and be limited only to those involved when activation of the COOP is necessary. Sharing this document outside of those involved with COOP implementation is at the sole discretion of the department itself.

ANNUAL REVISIONS

Governor's Executive Order 41 (2011) established the requirement for state agencies and institutes of higher education to maintain a Continuity of Operations Plan. The University reaffirms this requirement through policies 5615 and 1005 which require COOP plan update and submission to the Office of Emergency Management annually.

COOP updates are required to be completed annually by March 15. Plans must be updated using the Virginia Tech Office of Emergency Management Planning Portal.

If you require additional assistance with the development or revision of your COOP,
please contact The Office of Emergency Management at 540-231-4873 or oem@vt.edu.

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