

INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE REPORT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
TIMELINE OF EVENTS	4
IDHS ACTIONS TO COMBAT COVID-19	5
State Emergency Operations Center	
Activation of the State Emergency Operations Center	
Requests for Support	
Joint Information Center	
Emergency Medical Services	
Increase Number of Available EMS Responders	
Waivers of Certain EMS Rules	
Coordinating EMS Transport Resources	
Indiana National Guard Planning	
COVID-19 EMS Manual	
Assessing EMS PPE Needs	
IDHS OPERATIONS IMPACTED BY EXECUTIVE ORDERS	8
Executive Order 20-04	
Executive Order 20-05	
Executive Order 20-08	
Executive Order 20-09	
Executive Order 20-19	
RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS FUTURE EMERGENCIES	9
Electronic Administrative Orders	
Emergency Management Training	

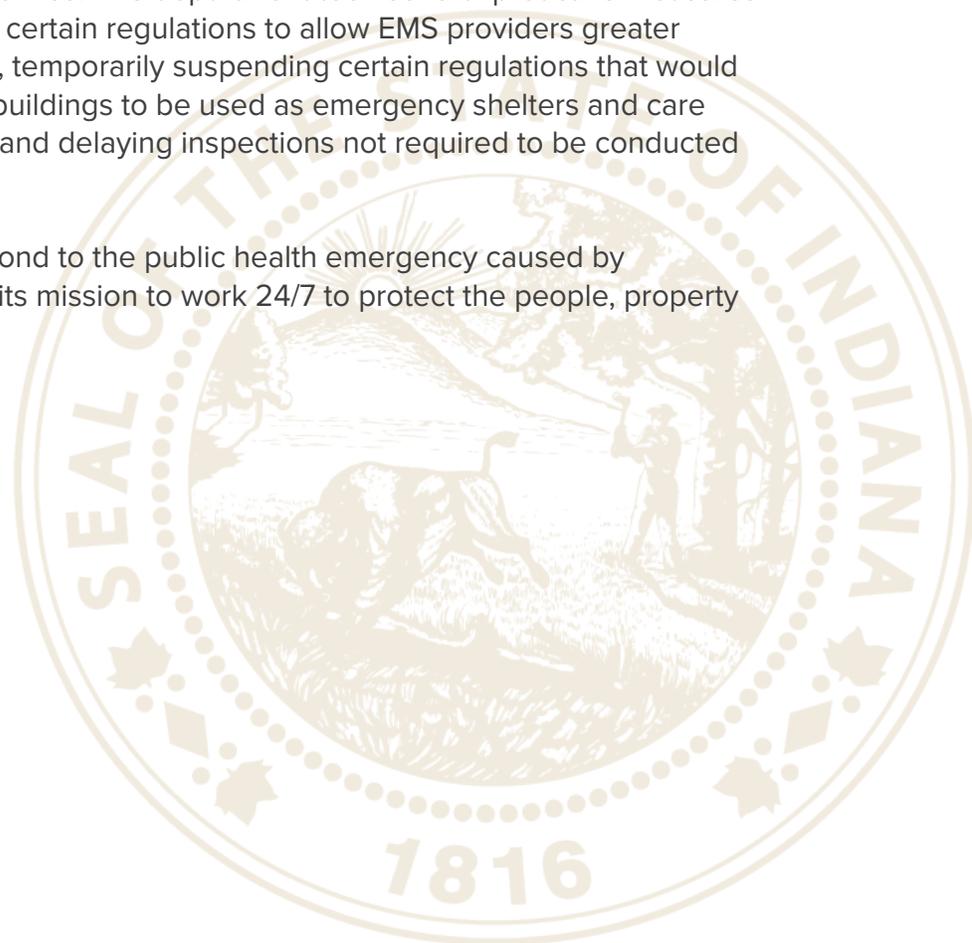


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) leads Indiana's emergency planning and operations, first responder training and fire and building safety. In accordance with Legislative Council Resolution 20-02, IDHS prepared this report to inform its partners in the Indiana General Assembly of the actions IDHS took to respond to the public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 virus. IDHS is proud to report on the initiatives and sustained activities that were implemented to protect Hoosiers.

From March 1, 2020, to July 1, 2020, IDHS far exceeded previous operational capacities, such as managing the State Emergency Operations Center for more than 100 consecutive operational periods. Moreover, IDHS quickly adapted to new authorities granted by various executive orders, including holding 11 virtual board and commission meetings, standing up a hotline to answer Hoosiers' questions regarding essential businesses, and allowing former Emergency Medical Service (EMS) professionals to return to service. The department took several proactive measures to increase public safety, such as waiving certain regulations to allow EMS providers greater flexibility to operate during the pandemic, temporarily suspending certain regulations that would hinder the construction or conversion of buildings to be used as emergency shelters and care facilities from being set up expeditiously, and delaying inspections not required to be conducted by law.

As Indiana continues to monitor and respond to the public health emergency caused by COVID-19, IDHS stands ready to execute its mission to work 24/7 to protect the people, property and prosperity of Indiana.



THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON IDHS

KEY



Executive Order



IDHS Modified Operations

**Mar.
06**

Executive Order 20-02

Indiana announces first case of COVID-19. Gov. Holcomb declares a public health emergency.

**Mar.
09**

State Emergency Operations Center increases to Level III activation.

**Mar.
11**

IDHS issues the first of three (3) statewide blanket waivers for rules and regulations related to Emergency Medical Services' response to COVID-19. Additional waivers were issued by IDHS on March 17 and March 24.

**Mar.
16**

Executive Order 20-04

Indiana announces the state's first death from COVID-19. Gov. Holcomb directs the Emergency Operations Center to increase and remain at its highest status (Level I). Requirements for public meetings are relaxed or suspended for the duration of the public health emergency.

**Mar.
17**

IDHS Executive Director orders all nonessential meetings to be suspended or conducted electronically and for IDHS employees to begin working remotely whenever possible.

**Mar.
19**

Executive Order 20-05

State agencies are granted the power to waive, suspend, or modify existing rules where enforcement would be detrimental to the public welfare during the emergency and may extend any non-essential deadline for their agency for a period of no longer than sixty (60) days.

**Mar.
19**

IDHS modifies inspection procedures for lift devices, boilers, pressure vessels, amusement devices, and structures which are not specifically required by statute or rule.

**Mar.
23**

Executive Order 20-08

Gov. Holcomb issues a Stay-at-Home order requiring residents to stay home unless following social distancing. It also prohibits gathering of 10+ people and closes all places of public amusement.

**Mar.
23**

Executive Order 20-09

Restricts public access to state government buildings, offices, and facilities. Requires employees of state agencies to work remotely unless the employee's physical presence is required to perform an essential function. Provides automatic extension of any state agency-issued license, certification, or permit which expired during, or was set to expire during, the public health emergency.

**Mar.
24**

IDHS stands up the Critical Industries Hotline and provides staff to answer questions regarding essential businesses

**Apr.
03**

IDHS publishes an Emergency Medical Services Manual for COVID-19.

**Apr.
07**

Executive Order 20-19

Gov. Holcomb issues an order that health-care providers without an active license, including recently retired or inactive EMS professionals, may serve again in health care during the public health emergency.

**Apr.
07**

First virtual meeting of a commission held with the Fire Prevention and Building Safety Commission.

- Fire Prevention and Building Safety Commission held virtual meetings on April 7, May 6, June 4, and July 9
- Board of Firefighting Personnel Standards and Education held virtual meetings on May 4 and June 17
- Emergency Medical Services Commission held virtual meetings on May 14 and July 9
- Emergency Response Commission held virtual meetings on May 11 and July 13
- Secured School Safety Board held a virtual meeting on July 31

**Jun.
12**

Emergency Operations Center decreases to Level III.

IDHS ACTIONS TO COMBAT COVID-19

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

ACTIVATION OF THE STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

During disasters or emergencies, IDHS manages the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) to orchestrate a multi-agency response system. The SEOC is the Indiana coordination center that allows subject matter experts and key organization personnel from different disciplines to facilitate a synchronized response to disasters, emergencies, or other significant events. To do so, the SEOC works with local, state, and federal officials to support the state’s needs in times of distress.

The SEOC can be activated at four different levels of response, depending on the severity of the event. For SEOC operating levels beyond Level IV (daily operations) staff from various state agencies can be brought in to assist with emergency management by filling emergency support function (ESF) roles. Each ESF represents a functional grouping of state agencies that are experts in activities often required in emergency management, such as transportation, mass care, and logistics. ESFs provide specialized assistance required by the overwhelming impact or specialized nature of a disaster—beyond what local units can sustain alone.

To respond to the public health emergency, the SEOC was activated at the following operational levels:

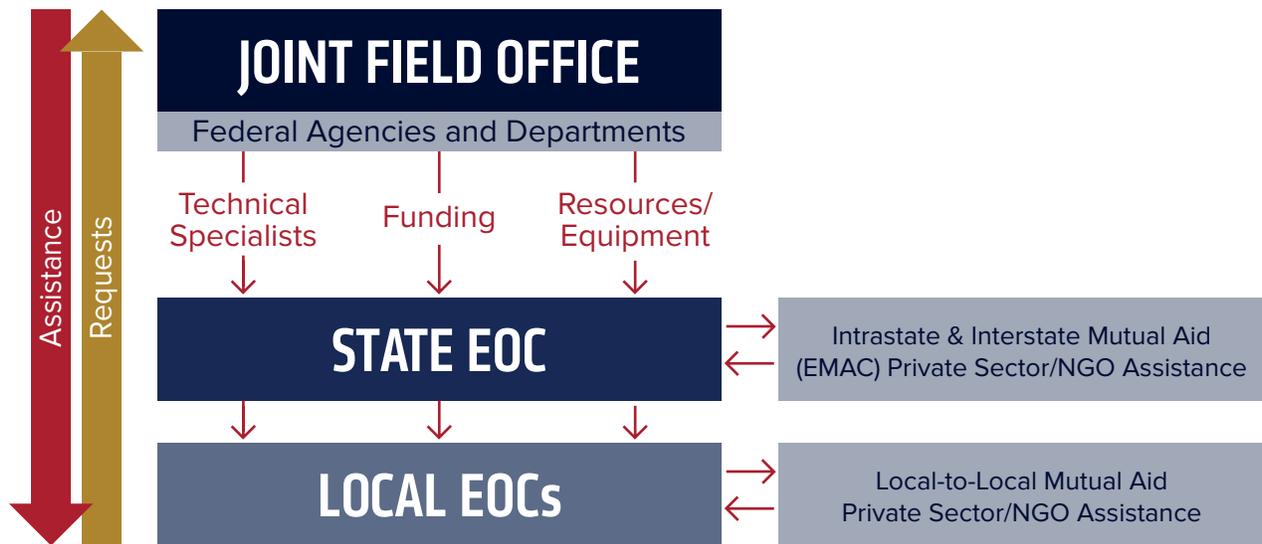
- 02/27/20 – Level IV, Enhanced Staff
- 03/09/20 – Level III
- 03/16/20 – Level I
- 06/12/20 – Level III

STATE RESPONSE ACTIVATION LEVELS		
IV	Daily Ops/Limited Emergency Conditions	Normal daily operations. Watch Desk is monitoring activities within and around the state.
III	Emergency Conditions	A situation has or may occur which requires an activation increase: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Section Chiefs• Joint Information Center (JIC) may be set up• Limited ESF staffing• May have a federal presence
II	Significant Emergency Conditions	A situation has or may occur which requires an activation increase: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Section Chiefs• JIC will be set up• Policy Group activated• Full ESF staffing• Federal presence
I	Full Emergency Conditions	A situation has or may occur which requires an activation increase: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Section Chiefs• JIC will be set up• Policy Group activated• Full ESF staffing• Federal presence• Governor or designee in Policy Group

It is important to highlight that from March 2, 2020, to July 1, 2020, IDHS managed 113 SEOC operational periods, including 87 at Level I. This is the longest SEOC activation period in the history of the SEOC. During the Level I activation period, the SEOC brought in several ESF roles, such as the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), the Integrated Public Safety Commission (IPSC), Indiana State Police (ISP), Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH), fire and emergency medical services representatives, the American Red Cross, and certain private sector representatives.

REQUESTS FOR SUPPORT

Another function of the SEOC is the coordination and fulfillment of requests for resources across the state. As local resource capabilities become overwhelmed, county emergency management agencies (EMA) request support from the SEOC. The resource request process flow is illustrated in the following figure:



From March 1 to July 1, 2020, the SEOC received 546 requests for resource support from county EMAs on behalf of law enforcement agencies, fire departments, emergency medical service (EMS) providers, and other local government entities. IDHS procured the requested items from various sources, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), pre-existing quantity purchase agreements, and donations.

Additionally, IDHS employees drove more than 15,000 miles across Indiana delivering personal protective equipment, commodities, and additional resources in support of local, state, and federal partners.

SUPPLIES DISTRIBUTED BY THE SEOC*

235,800	N95 Masks	2,152	Infrared Thermometers
25,650	Face Shields	115,680	Cloth Masks
394,520	KN90/Surgical Masks	546,000	Ear Loop Masks
113,500	Gloves	932	Bottled Water (cases)
97,022	Gowns	2,089	Cots
43,800	Gaylord Gowns	1,309	Blankets
8,184	Hand Sanitizer (gallons)		

*As of July 1, 2020

JOINT INFORMATION CENTER

During the public health emergency, and in an attempt to provide a single point of contact for information related to COVID-19, a Joint Information Center (JIC) was established with personnel from the Indiana State Department of Health, Indiana Department of Homeland Security, Indiana National Guard, and other partner agencies from within state and local government. IDHS provided staffing and logistical support for the JIC from March 20, 2020, to July 2, 2020. Forty-two staff members worked together as part of three teams and responded to approximately 2,200 inquiries from both media and citizens with an average of 23 inquires per day.

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

INCREASE EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONDERS

To increase the number of emergency responders in Indiana during the public health emergency, IDHS participated in the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) provisional certification program. NREMT, the national testing body for EMS certification and licensure, granted provisional certifications to certain applicants during the pandemic. Under the program, applicants who had completed an EMS program and passed a written examination but could not take a practical examination due the pandemic, could obtain a provisional certification, allowing an applicant to practice until practical testing resumed. As a result, 14 EMTs, 10 Advanced EMTs, and eight paramedics were allowed to practice under provisional certifications.

WAIVERS OF CERTAIN EMS RULES

IDHS utilized IC 16-31-3-5 waiver authority to address challenges to EMS operations posed by COVID-19. Proactively, IDHS issued three blanket general waiver orders to address broad changes impacting EMS operations during the public health emergency. The general waiver orders allowed:

- EMS providers to work with their medical directors and dispatch to develop 911 screening policies;
- EMS organizations to alter their existing protocols or create new protocols, including alternate means of transport;
- EMS organizations to dedicate a state EMS response vehicle for response and/or transport of suspected COVID-19 patients;
- EMS organizations to determine priority of calls;
- Medical directors to designate alternate destinations or downgrading of patients;
- Sanitation procedures to mirror CDC recommendations;
- Flexibility regarding certain medication expiration dates if there is a shortage of the medication due to the public health emergency;
- Certain patients to be transported in non-ambulance vehicles if a sufficient number of ambulances were not available in the system due to a public health emergency (and alternative transport guidelines were approved);
- Consumables and PPE to be waived from compliance with minimum stocking level during shortages;
- Certain changes to staffing requirements if an EMS organization was experiencing a staff shortage due to the public health emergency.

COORDINATING EMS TRANSPORT RESOURCES

IDHS created a list of EMS transporting resources per EMS district to aid regional hospital coordination of resources. Moreover, staff developed a system for assisting hospitals with patient transfers and created a dedicated 24/7 hotline to facilitate transports.

INDIANA NATIONAL GUARD EMS PLANNING

IDHS created and exercised a plan to utilize the Indiana National Guard in EMS transfers should normal EMS capacity not be sufficient to meet the state's EMS demand.

COVID-19 EMS MANUAL

IDHS created and published a [COVID-19 EMS Manual](#) to provide guidance and recommended protocols related to COVID-19 for EMS agencies in Indiana.

ASSESSING EMS PPE NEEDS

IDHS worked with the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) to expand ISDH's EMResource website to include EMS providers. By doing so, EMS agencies were able to report their PPE availability and needs. After the initial set-up, IDHS monitored the EMResource board for EMS agencies that were critically low on PPE and worked with ISDH to procure necessary PPE.

IDHS OPERATIONS IMPACTED BY EXECUTIVE ORDERS

EXECUTIVE ORDER 20-04

[Executive Order 20-04](#) required the SEOC to operate at a Level I activation.

Additionally, Executive Order 20-04 suspended or modified certain public meetings and public records requirements during the public health emergency, allowing government bodies to meet electronically. As a result, several IDHS-managed boards and commissions shifted to virtual meetings. As of August 1, 2020, the following meetings took place in accordance with Executive Order 20-04:

- Board of Firefighting Personnel Standards and Education met virtually on May 4 and June 17, 2020.
- Emergency Medical Services Commission held a virtual meeting on May 14 and July 9, 2020.
- Fire Prevention and Building Safety Commission met virtually on April 7, May 6, June 4, and July 7, 2020.
- Indiana Emergency Response Commission conducted a hybrid socially distanced and virtual meeting on May 11 and July 13, 2020.
- Secured School Safety Board met virtually July 31, 2020.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 20-05

Due to the public health emergency created by the COVID-19 virus, [Executive Order 20-05](#) granted agencies the power to waive, suspend, or modify existing rules where enforcement would be detrimental to the public welfare during the emergency. To proactively respond to the anticipated need for additional structures to be used as shelters, care facilities, or hospitals during this time, the Fire Prevention and Building Safety Commission modified and waived several regulations at its April 7, 2020 meeting that allowed such facilities to be made more readily available.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 20-08

In response to [Executive Order 20-08](#), which required nonessential businesses to temporarily close, IDHS created the Critical Industries Hotline. From March 24 to June 12, 2020, IDHS employees staffed the hotline and answered more than 16,000 Hoosiers' calls regarding whether a business could be open and, if so, under what conditions.

Per Executive Order 20-08, IDHS also suspended or cancelled several trainings, exercises, and testing opportunities in order to comply with stay at home orders and social distancing guidelines. This included EMS psychomotor testing, firefighter training and testing, search and rescue training, emergency management courses, the state level exercise, the south regional exercise, in-person complex coordinated terrorist attack programs, and local emergency planning committee exercises scheduled during the public health emergency.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 20-09

[Executive Order 20-09](#) granted extensions for state agency-issued licenses, permits, and inspections set to expire during the public health emergency. In accordance with the executive orders, applicable boiler, pressure vessel, lifting device, amusement ride, and building inspections and permits were granted extensions. For inspections that were statutorily required to continue, field staff were issued PPE to enhance their safety while performing inspections. Additionally, IDHS temporarily paused inspections not required by statute to further comply with public health recommendations.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 20-19

[Executive Order 20-19](#) contained language suspending part of IC 16-31-3-5, which governs IDHS and EMS Commission waivers. The executive order removed a statutory prohibition on waiving educational requirements. This was vital, as many EMS programs had limited classroom and clinical site education opportunities during the public health emergency. IDHS issued a blanket general waiver, which permitted the substitution of hospital clinical education with ambulance clinical education, as ambulance clinical education remained more accessible than hospital clinical education during the pandemic. The executive order allowed IDHS to grant 12 educational standard waivers, which produced more EMT candidates.

Additionally, under Executive Order 20-19, some former EMS professionals who no longer had an active license could provide certain medical services under appropriate supervision. This was done to ensure Hoosiers had enough EMS professionals able to respond if necessary during the public health emergency. As a result, IDHS issued six temporary licenses allowing former EMTs to perform certain services.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS FUTURE EMERGENCIES

ELECTRONIC ADMINISTRATIVE ORDERS

The Administrative Orders and Procedures Act requires certain notices, such as administrative orders, to be served via United States mail. During the public health emergency, the mail requirement became an impediment to IDHS conducting business, as most employees were not in the office and did not have access to IDHS resources, such as official stationery and postage. To better prepare for future emergencies in which staff may not be located in the office, IC 4-21.5-3-1(c)(1) should be amended to allow electronic communication, such as email, to be used.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TRAINING

IDHS will continue to work with all federal, state, and local partner agencies to ensure personnel are up-to-date on emergency management training standards, incident command structure, and disaster emergency laws in Indiana. New trainings will need to be developed and exercised with partner organizations to allow for enhanced coordination and response during the next event or disaster.

*The Indiana Department of Homeland Security works 24/7
to protect the people, property and prosperity of Indiana.*



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