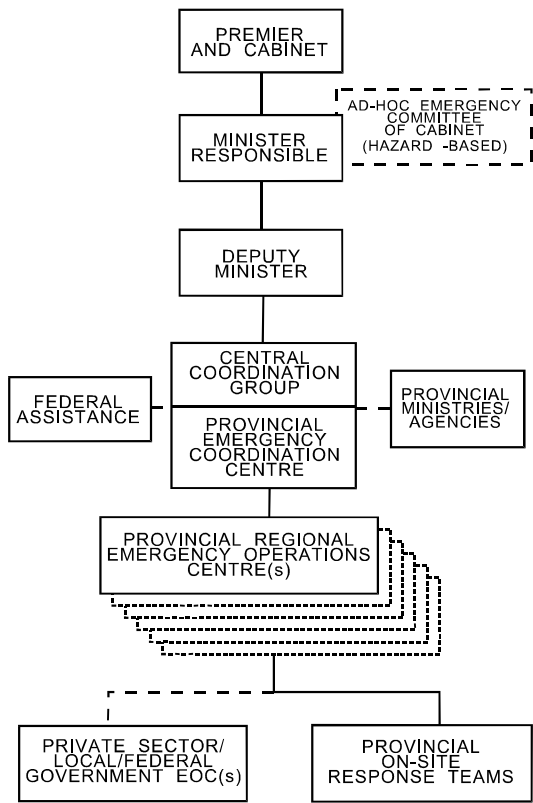The province of British Columbia emergency management structure has developed and adopted BCERMS (British Columbia Emergency Response Management System) as a comprehensive management system that ensures coordinated and organized response to emergencies.

BRITISH COLUMBIA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

* Ad hoc committee that may be formed in the event of a severe emergency or catastrophic event.

BCERMS – What is it?

BCERMS (British Columbia Emergency Response Management System) is a comprehensive management system based upon the Incident Command System (ICS) that ensures a coordinated and organized response and recovery to all emergency incidents and disasters. It provides the framework for a standardized emergency response in British Columbia.

BCERMS - How does it work?

The framework of BCERMS is divided into five components that support standardized emergency management and response at all levels of response to an emergency or disaster.

Operations and Control:
- provides a common organizational structure and control method for the management of personnel, equipment, facilities and resources;
- enhances communications between agencies in the preparation and implementation of response operations; and
- details a site response structure based on ICS, plus three levels of coordinated support and direction.

Qualifications:
- establishes a standard for the management of each functional area and level within the emergency response management system.

Technology:
- establishes the use of common technology in support of emergency operations.

Training:
- mandates the training of designated personnel to meet the established standards.

Publications:
- mandates distribution of a common set of forms, reports, instructional terminology and other written material in support of the standard.

What are the four levels of BCERMS emergency response?

Site Level - 1001:
BCERMS is used to manage the response. Responders may represent all levels of government and the private sector. Response on-site is directed by single command or unified command.

Site Support Level - 1002:
When the site level response requires off-site support, an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) may be activated. The EOC:
- provides communication with the site level;
- provides policy guidance;
- manages the local multiple-agency support to the site level; and
- acquires and deploys additional resources, obtained locally or from other EOCs or the provincial regional level.

Provincial Regional Coordination Level - 1003:
When the site support level (EOC) requires off-site support, the Provincial Regional Coordination level:
- establishes and activates one or more Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centres (PREOCs);
- manages the assignment of multiple-ministry and agency support to individual site support locations or multiple site support level locations;
- acquires and deploys resources at the request of the site support level;
- provides emergency response services where incidents cross local authority boundaries, or where local authorities are not organized to fulfil their role; and
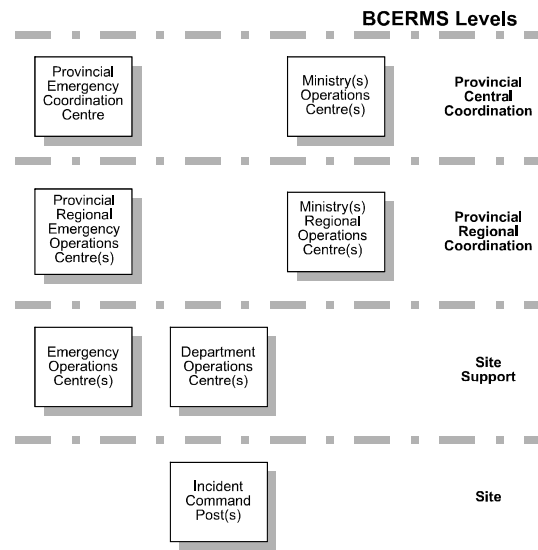- coordinates with ministry regional centres when they are established.

Provincial Central Coordination Level - 1004:
The Provincial Central Coordination Level manages the overall provincial government support for the regional levels. This level comprises the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre (PECC) and the Central Coordination Group (CCG), and it:
- seeks direction of senior elected officials;
- obtains authority of the minister for a declaration of a provincial emergency;
- provides provincial policy guidance;
- establishes provincial priorities;
- manages provincial emergency public information activities;

- manages the acquisition and deployment of provincial, federal, inter-provincial and international resources; and
- provides coordination and other support services to provincial ministry or Crown corporation operations centres, as well as federal emergency response agencies.

BCERMS OPERATING LEVELS

TEAMS – what is it?

The Temporary Emergency Assignment Management System (TEAMS) is a new concept to improve the province's ability to staff emergency operation centres during an emergency response. Through TEAMS, the province will maintain a province-wide pool of staff, trained and experienced in BCERMS. TEAMS staff will provide on-site support to implement BCERMS throughout British Columbia in emergency response situations.

What are the BCERMS response objectives?

BCERMS supports the following response objectives to:
- provide for the safety and health of all responders;
- save lives and reduce suffering;

- protect public health;
- protect government infrastructure;
- protect property and the environment; and
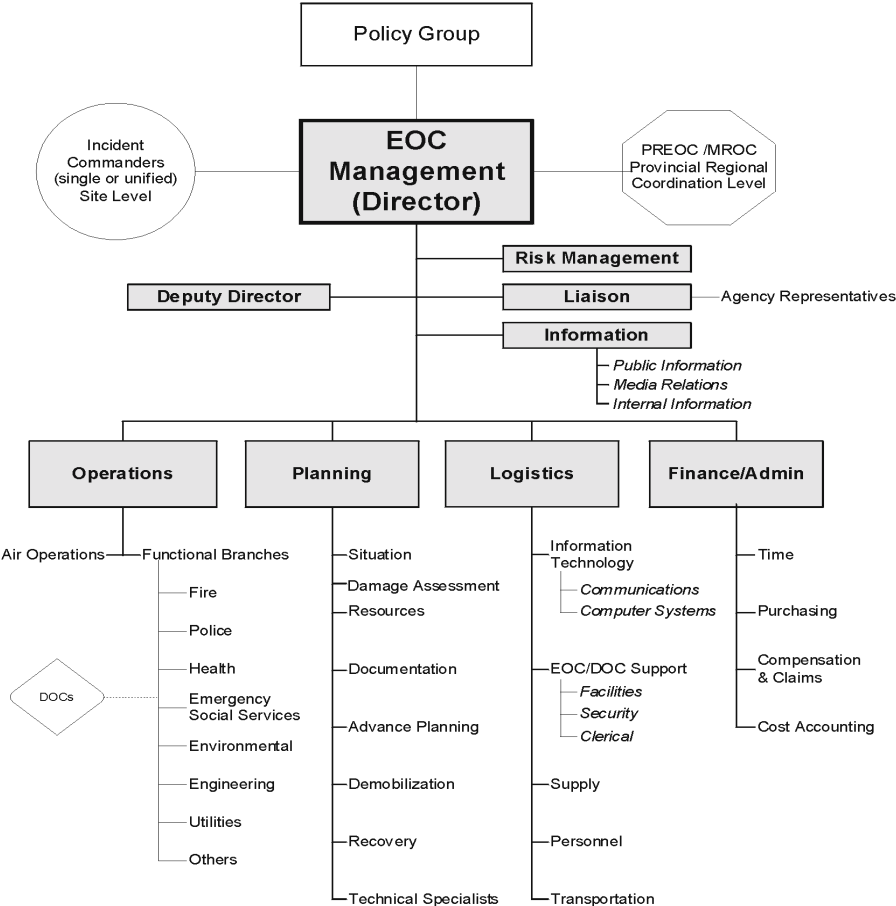- reduce economic and social losses.

How is BCERMS organized?

The diagram below shows a fully-functional emergency operations centre which would be typical of one found in a major operation conducted by a mid- to large-sized municipality. This is Site Support level. Note that the organization is similar at all four levels (Site, Site Support, Provincial Regional, Provincial Central). The few variances in staff functions that one can find are based on a greater requirement for coordination as well as increased sites or staff team supervision (span of control) at levels above Site.

The key to building a staff organization such as this, is pre-planning and training of personnel. Key positions such as the Director and all Section Chiefs (Operations, Planning, Logistics, Finance/Admin) must be trained.

In addition, where a particular position is neither needed nor is a person available to fill it, then the next level up must assume that function. This is a given throughout BCERMS. Bearing this in mind, the structure can retain much flexibility and can be tailored to the task(s) at hand.

More detailed information about BCERMS is available in the BCERMS Overview Manual and in the BCERMS Emergency Operations Centre Operational Guidelines. Both publications are available on the PEP Web site: www.pep.bc.ca

British Columbia Emergency Response Management System (BCERMS)

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Provincial Emergency Program
Ministry of Attorney General