Professional Standard:
Certified Operations Officer Capabilities

Authority

This standard was endorsed by the EMPS Panel in August 2018.

Context

This document is a high-level outline of capabilities that can be observed in practice. These are capabilities expected of personnel in an Incident Management Team who wish to have their practice acknowledged and certified as part of AFAC's Professionalisation Scheme. It is expected that demonstrating the capabilities will require a portfolio of evidence collected over time.

This document is NOT:
- a prescription of what training courses should be delivered;
- a replacement for agency sign off and validation that personnel are able to do the job;
- a selection and recruitment tool for trainees, or
- a template to be used to sign off capabilities in a once-off observation.

The Operations Officer is delegated the role and responsibility for Operations at an incident by the Incident Controller.

The Operations Officer will be required to exercise critical thinking and judgement to determine the level of resources and structure required to manage the Operations function, as well as maintain effective information flow and reporting arrangements.

Operations are conducted in accordance with AIIMS (Au)/CIMS (NZ) and other systems aligned with AIIMS principles and functions.

Appointment of Operations Officers

Appointment to the role of Operations Officer for an emergency incident is made by the Incident Controller, or otherwise in accordance with jurisdictional emergency management arrangements. The Incident Controller retains ultimate responsibility for the effective management of the incident management team, including the Operations section.

Accountabilities

The Operations Officer will be required to:

- obtain briefings from the Incident Controller
- lead and manage the Operations Section
- exchange information with the Planning, Intelligence (where established), Public Information and Logistics Sections on a regular basis
- contribute to the development of the Incident Action Plan

- establish an Operations Section of size and structure appropriate to the incident, and approved by the Incident Controller
- brief and allocate operations personnel in accordance with the Incident Action Plan
- manage and supervise operations at the incident, and monitor progress
- advise Planning Section, Intelligence Section and the Incident Controller of incident situation, control progress, and emerging risks
- establish and maintain staging areas
- determine the need for, and request additional resources
- determine the need for logistical support
- assemble strike teams and task forces from allocated single resources as appropriate
- coordinate operational activities, across Divisions and Sectors, in the implementation of incident objectives and strategies
- reallocate or release strike teams and task forces allocated to the Operations Section
- initiate recommendations for release of resources
- report events and accidents.

The extent to which these accountabilities are required is determined by the scale of incident to be managed.

The explicit tasks and responsibilities are described and explained in the *AIIMS Manual* **(2017).**

Stakeholders

The Operations Officer may be required to manage relationships with a range of stakeholders including:

- the Public Information, Planning, Intelligence and Logistics sections in the incident management structure
- state and regional coordination and control centres.

Areas of capability

There are two main areas of capability for Incident Management Team members (see Appendix 1), these are:
1. capabilities to *manage the incident*, and
2. capabilities relevant to the specific *hazard context*.

1. **Capabilities to manage the incident** include the ability to:

Model Leadership and Teamwork: the ability to act with integrity, influence others, and facilitate team efforts towards the achievement of common goals. This involves:
- modelling ethics, inclusiveness and good governance;
- creating effective background conditions to build confident and capable teams and engaged stakeholders, and
- applying effective decision making.

Think and plan strategically: the ability to consider multiple perspectives and scenarios to engage in strategic planning and consequence management. This involves:
- pursuing sense-making and encouraging same in others;
- practicing strategic thinking and planning;

- planning and mapping diverse audiences;
- enabling consequence management.

Demonstrate self-awareness: the ability to monitor stress and fatigue, display resilience and agility and reflect on and adjust to feedback. This involves:
- monitoring and managing self for symptoms of stress and fatigue;
- displaying resilience and agility, and
- recognising own strengths and limitations.

2. **Capabilities related to the specific hazard context** include the ability to:

Apply technical skills/knowledge: having a relevant understanding of existing policies, structures and doctrine to be applied when managing the incident. This involves:
- effectively applying appropriate legislation, policy and procedures;
- effectively managing the Operations function at an incident in accordance with AIIMS doctrine;
- demonstrating understanding of broader stakeholder EM arrangements, and
- demonstrating understanding of available systems and technologies.

Employ expertise in hazard specific knowledge: apply a specialist understanding in the Operations context (obtaining specialist advice as required) of the risks and behaviours of hazards such as fire, severe weather (flood, storm, and cyclone), search and rescue, hazardous materials, aviation and other hazards.

The following table (Appendix 1) describe these capabilities and the expectations for each of the five areas of capability.

Review

This standard will commence August 2018. The Panel will review this standard after five years or as required.

Related professional standards

This document should be read in conjunction with:

- Code of Ethics (2017)
- Professional Standard: Operations Officer Requirements (2018)
- Professional Standard: Continuing Professional Development (2018)
- EMPS Core Incident Management Team Capabilities

Area of Capability	Capability	Incident Management Capability	Behavioural Indicators
Model Leadership and Teamwork *The ability to act with integrity, influence others, facilitate team efforts towards the achievement of common goals*	Model ethics, inclusiveness and good governance	• Behave in ways consistent with the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct* • Engage in building partnerships with multiple stakeholders through establishing collaborative goals with agreed parameters and treating stakeholders with respect • Demonstrate resilience and moral courage • Accept scrutiny as a naturally occurring process during a crisis	• Acts in accordance with the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct* • Acts in alignment with organisational frameworks (e.g., OH&S policy) • Employs compelling communication to deliver key messages with integrity • Treats others with respect • Applies governance processes and procedures for the greater good • Displays courage to make hard decisions • Establishes and maintains appropriate governance processes, including processes to engage in upward chain of command and lateral multi-agency coordination, along with whole-of-government processes
	Create effective background conditions to build confident and capable teams and engaged stakeholders	• Engage immediate team and stakeholders so that they are motivated to achieve the outcomes sought • Create team communication climates where all team members feel safe to speak up about any concerns they may have regardless of rank or status, without fear of ridicule or recrimination • Recognise and contribute critical information to support cross-functional team work and decision-making • Proactively seek opportunities to help achieve team goals **Critical capabilities for an Operations Officer:**	• Creates a collaborative team climate (e.g., communicates in a way that is open, direct, measured, and approachable) • Pursues honest and open input and feedback • Responds promptly and constructively to questions and concerns raised • Uses effective communication to advocate for the needs of the team • Monitors team member capability and addresses any dysfunctional behaviour or gaps

Area of Capability	Capability	Incident Management Capability	Behavioural Indicators
		• Establish confidence in frontline personnel that their safety and the safety of affected communities are paramount • Establish a communications climate where frontline personnel • Monitor incident ground performance without micro-management	
	Apply effective decision-making	• Make effective decisions in a timely manner under conditions of uncertainty, incomplete information, tight deadlines, and pressure and to acknowledge the limitations of these conditions • Balance operational outcomes with government, community and stakeholder expectations with team requirements • Collaborate with others in decision-making to reach an agreed approach • Recognise and articulate the triggers that would require a decision change • Monitor progress to assess alignment with the objectives and reset as necessary **Critical capabilities for an Operations Officer:** • Apply hazard-appropriate operational tactics to implement the decision made in alignment with the Incident Action Plan • Clearly explain the decision intent to a distributed frontline team so that they can confidently adapt as needed • Communicate effectively so that front line personnel have ownership and understand the expectation	• Is timely in making decisions that can be assessed as likely to be reasonable at their point in time • Employs decision-making styles appropriate and demonstrates flexibility appropriates to the context (e.g., balances the need for speed, thoroughness and inclusiveness with the time available) • Can explain, when asked, the reasons for the decision made as well as the processes used (e.g., can articulate how team and stakeholder needs have been taken into consideration in the decisions made) • Clearly articulates the triggers that would require a decision change and recognises them when they occur in practice • Proactively looks for early signs of when the decision needs to be adjusted • Employs conflict resolution and negotiation strategies to balance competing stakeholder needs and priorities, to achieve an agreed decision • Utilises effective communication to communicate decisions made and to ensure decision intent is implemented

Area of Capability	Capability	Incident Management Capability	Behavioural Indicators
		• Quickly recognise early triggers signalling trouble and act to secure the safety of responders and communities threatened by the event	
Think and plan strategically *The ability to consider multiple perspectives and scenarios to engage in strategic planning and consequence management*	Pursue sense-making and encourage same in others	• Make meaning from sometimes incomplete or conflicting information in high pressure environments • Ability to listen carefully and to recognise discrepancies between expectations and reality • Critically evaluate information and intelligence promptly, to assess risk and diagnose the decision most likely to lead to a positive outcome • Understand the sensitivity of various pieces of intelligence and gaps • Identify what is NOT being considered or said • Proactively attune to subtle signals that conditions are deteriorating and ask good questions to ascertain what is happening **Critical capabilities for an Operations Officer:** • Recognise the cues that a plan is failing or needs significant change • Engage frontline personnel in sense-making to test assumptions • Quickly recognise the implications of an evolving event • Assess the strength of competing information	• Establishes mechanisms for testing and improving situational awareness • Identifies knowledge gaps, uncertainty, threats and emerging issues so that these can be managed • Is able to identify patterns and trends in a timely manner • Encourages (and coaches if needed) other team members to engage in critical questioning and frank discussion to test assumptions and process conflicting information • Seeks alternative opinions and perspectives including contra-indicators • Can outline how a judgement has taken into account personal and group biases • Projects possible future conditions based on information and intelligence gathered, weighing up difference sources of credibility
	Practice strategic thinking and planning	• Convert sense-making into a course of potential action • Articulate objectives, strategies and actions determined through sense-making so that they provide a good basis for planning and decision-making for all involved	• Can predict future conditions that reflect the information gathered through sense-making and evaluate those options • Can clearly explain the significance and potential consequences of predictions

Area of Capability	Capability	Incident Management Capability	Behavioural Indicators
		• Prioritise multiple time and space issues to identify what is important to plan for, and to filter what is not • Employ strategies to avoid being distracted by minutia and to maintain a wider focus, canvassing future outcomes, options and potential impact **Critical capabilities for an Operations Officer:** • Collaborate with the PO to develop plans across multiple time scales and multiple geographical locations • Monitor the effectiveness of tactical operations and adjust as necessary • Maintain a broader strategic view and avoid becoming overly fixated on the details • Proactively anticipate potential gaps and breakdowns as the event is unfolding and show agility in thinking about how to address these gaps	• Can clearly and concisely explain the information strategies chosen • Explains the assumptions on which plans are based and triggers for reassessing plans • Acts quickly to adjust the strategy as the context changes • Demonstrates creativity and flexibility in adapting plans to improvise in novel situations
	Enables consequence management	• Maintain a focus on consequences of the incident and actions and assess the consequences of actions to resolve the incident • Engage in contingency planning, adjust strategies • Assess broader issues beyond the immediate incident. **Critical capabilities for an Operations Officer:** • Identify the consequences from what can – and cannot – be tactically achieved, and develop strategies to minimise any negative impacts on those affected • Identify the longer-term consequences of operational response on all front line personnel and enact appropriate OH&S policy	• Can identify all those who are potentially affected by the incident • Can explain the long term impacts of the incident including the consequences of actions to resolve the incident • Anticipates what might go wrong and any unintended adverse effects • Explains contingency planning for adverse effects • Flexibly matches communication style to audience

Area of Capability	Capability	Incident Management Capability	Behavioural Indicators
		• Identify the longer-term consequences of operational response on all stakeholders and support efforts to move quickly towards recovery	
Demonstrate self-awareness *The ability to monitor stress and fatigue, display resilience and agility, and reflect and adjust to feedback*	Monitor and manage self for symptoms of stress and fatigue	• Develop effective strategies to manage psychological and physiological demands • Employ strategies to identify and manage personal limitations and impact of biases • Manage emotion and display empathy	• Maintains focus and remains grounded when under pressure • Uses coping strategies to manage under sub-optimal conditions • Self-regulates emotions under the pressure of challenging circumstances • Monitors self-behaviour and its impact on others
	Display resilience and agility	• Adapt and overcome adversity • Employ personal strategies to operate effectively in challenging conditions to maintain well-being • Respond to pressure and setbacks whilst remaining focused on objectives and outcomes	• Engages in a realistic assessment of predicted tough days • Copes with flux, the unexpected and incomplete information • Recovers quickly from setbacks and persevere to get things done despite difficulties • Is flexible when faced with sub-optimal or novel conditions and is improvises in response • Accepts that things do go wrong and sometimes there are limits to what can be controlled • Acts promptly to signs that action is not producing the desired outcomes
	Recognise own strengths and limitations	• Recognise and monitor personal limitations and biases • Critically reflect on and identify areas of self-improvement in action and in review	• Appreciates limitations and avoids arrogance and hubris • Accepts feedback or criticism and adjust appropriately and objectively • Objectively evaluates what went well and what did not

Area of Capability	Capability	Incident Management Capability	Behavioural Indicators
			• Critically reflects on own performance and takes responsibility • Demonstrates learning from feedback and experience • Seeks opportunities to extend knowledge, skills and experience • Enacts plans for continued professional development
Apply technical skills / knowledge	Apply appropriate legislation, policy and procedures	• Explain, appropriately interpret, and apply relevant legislation, policies and doctrine • Lead, manage and operate within legislative and governance frameworks • Act in alignment with policies supporting decision making, for example in relation to issue of warnings	• Can explain, appropriately interpret, and apply legislation, policies and doctrine relevant to the jurisdiction
	Demonstrate community engagement background or experience	• Identify key factors in effective engagement of communities • Understand needs of diverse cross-section of community members • Maintains effective communication to communities/individuals in stressful situations or demonstrating distress and anger	• Can articulate/explain the requirements of effective community engagement and communication as they apply to the range of communities and individuals encountered in practice • Can apply effective communication techniques for stressed communities and manage challenging community feedback and emotions including anger and distress
	Manage the Operations Section in accordance with AIIMS doctrine	• Apply AIIMS to manage the Operations Section • Lead, manage and operate to Incident Management Systems principles and structures	• Appropriately applies AIIMS to manage the Operations Section
	Demonstrate understanding of broader stakeholder EM arrangements	• Apply emergency management arrangements • Recognise organisational capabilities and limitations of stakeholders • Understand the application of multi-organisational arrangements	• Works within the organisational and multi-organisational arrangement

Area of Capability	Capability	Incident Management Capability	Behavioural Indicators
	Demonstrate understanding of available systems and technologies	• Recognise and deploy appropriate systems and technologies • Understand the strengths and limitations of systems and technologies	• Selects and uses technologies appropriate to the incident
Employ expertise in Hazard Specific Knowledge	Demonstrate understanding of Fire, Severe Weather (flood, storm, cyclone), Search and Rescue, Hazardous Materials, Aviation and other hazards	• Apply specialist understanding of the risks and behaviours of hazards (such as fire, severe weather (i.e. flood, storm and cyclone), search and rescue, hazardous materials, aviation, and other hazards) • Apply expertise in hazard-specific knowledge including understanding the behavioural characteristics and the risks that the hazard poses. • Seek specialist advice as required to support decision making **Critical Operations Officer capabilities include:** • Hazard-specific knowledge and experience is essential	• Uses hazard specific knowledge to inform their management of the Operations function