



**ASSOCIATION OF HEALTHCARE
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS
PROFESSIONALS**

**AHEPP Guide to the Professional Standards of Healthcare
Emergency Management**

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Statement from AHEPP Leadership

The Association of Healthcare Emergency Preparedness Professionals is pleased to present the AHEPP Guide to the Professional Standards of Healthcare Emergency Management. This Guide is a framework from which the professionalization of our field can be built. Clear competencies help us identify where we are strong, and where we need work. They allow us to not only assess ourselves but allow an industry to assess us. Finally, they explain to the industry the complexities of the positions we hold, and the breadth of skills, knowledge, and abilities required to perform our roles.

This guide is a culmination of effort by the AHEPP Professional Standards Committee. The committee worked diligently to create a framework that represents the current state of healthcare preparedness. Of special note is the work of Angie Santiago from Wakefield Brunswick, Inc. Ms. Santiago not only led the Professionals Standards Committee but read volumes of information from the National Fire Protection Agency, Emergency Management Institute, Center for Medicare/Medicaid Services, and others. She consolidated this information and provided the committee the proper needles from the regulatory and educational haystack. AHEPP is very grateful to her for her incredible efforts.

It is our hope that this Guide provides another step on the journey from healthcare emergency preparedness being “other duties as assigned” to a profession. The knowledge and skills required to perform well in this field are significant and the industry within which we perform our duties becomes more complicated, regulated, and scrutinized every year. Being a healthcare emergency preparedness professional is, to say the very least, a very challenging career choice. Those of you reading this document have our utmost respect for what you do for us, our families, and our communities.

In service to the profession,

The AHEPP Staff

AHEPP Professional Standards Committee

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About the AHEPP Professional Standards

The AHEPP Professional Standards are created and maintained by AHEPP's Professional Standards Committee. This guide is part of AHEPP's Common Body of Knowledge designed to educate healthcare emergency management professionals about the diverse elements of a robust healthy healthcare emergency management program. It may be used to assess an individual's professional capabilities or measure an organization's healthcare emergency management program.

Healthcare emergency management (HcEM) is an integrated management system which combines the tenets of mass casualties, medical surge, public health crises, crisis management, emergency management, healthcare administration, clinical operations, facilities continuity, business continuity, and cybersecurity. A healthcare emergency manager is an emergency management professional within the healthcare or public health sectors.

The AHEPP's Professional Standards provides a multi-faceted framework which uniquely addresses the risks to healthcare organizations and their unique preparedness and mitigation strategies, response, and recovery considerations.

AHEPP provides the Guide to Healthcare Emergency Management Professional Standards as a free resource to the general public or membership at <https://www.ahepp.org/page/ProfessionalStandards>. It is currently only available in English; however, future translations will be considered.

The AHEPP Professional Standards will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis or as the industry changes affect healthcare emergency management professionals.

For questions about this publication, please contact ahpepp@ahpepp.org. You may also visit the website at <https://www.ahepp.org/> for more information.

Approach

The AHEPP Professional Standards Committee conducted a literature review of documents, authoritative websites, training content, academic texts, journals, glossaries, and regulatory requirements publicly available to healthcare emergency management professionals. The published works were referenced with FEMA, Emergency Management Institute (EMI), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), National Institutes of Health, National Health Security Index, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness & Response (ASPR), and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

The Domains and Competencies subcommittee reviewed content and crosswalked them to the CMS Emergency Preparedness Rule, EMI training objective, and NFPA 1600-2019.

Source	Crosswalk to AHEPP Professional Standards
CMS Emergency Preparedness Rule	All healthcare facilities that receive reimbursement from the Centers of Medicare & Medicaid Services are required to comply to the Emergency Preparedness Rule. Which standards apply depends on which of the 17 facilities are implementing them. For the purpose of this publication, the Domains & Competencies Subcommittee reviewed the standards applicable to hospitals.
EMI Foundations Training	Current emergency management competencies established by the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA); the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM); and local, State, territorial, and tribal emergency management professionals in coordination with the Emergency Management Institute (EMI).
EMI Executive / Managerial Training	This competency area focuses on the knowledge and/or skills that managers need to manage an emergency management organization.
EMI Specialized Training & Education Level	This competency area focuses on the knowledge and/or skills emergency management professionals need to design effective approaches to (plans for)

	mitigating, preventing, or protecting against; preparing for; responding to; and recovering from all-hazard incidents, both natural and anthropogenic. This includes ensuring the engagement of all stakeholders in the planning process/plan execution.
EMI Strategic Leadership Training & Education Level	This competency area focuses on the knowledge and/or skills that leaders need to: (1) develop and implement vision and mission statements for an emergency management agency/organization that comprises key goals, priorities, and values, (2) develop and implement a strategic plan which supports the organization's vision and mission, and (3) balance the need to maintain continuity and address change by creating systems and procedures, holding personnel accountable to them, and encouraging creativity and innovation.
National Incident Management System	Published by the Department of Homeland Security, National Incident Management System (NIMS) is the foundational document which describes the preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery framework for public and private organizations which provide essential services to the United States. The NIMS phases preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery are included as part of the AHEPP Professional Standards Domains.
NFPA 1600-2019	NFPA's Standard on Continuity, Emergency Management and Crisis Management which integrates the practices of program management, emergency management, business continuity, and crisis management is an underutilized but effective tool.

Summary

Healthcare is delivered in the United States through complex systems of private and public entities which include facilities, providers, payers, supply chain, and service providers as well as local, state, and federal agencies.

Presidential Policy Directive 21 (PPD-21) categorizes Healthcare and Public Health as one of the critical infrastructure sectors vital to public health, economy, and the national safety and security of the United States. As such, healthcare organizations must be able to provide safe patient care during natural disasters, infrastructure failures, technology disruptions, violent attacks, or cybersecurity events.

The AHEPP Professional Standards provides guidance to healthcare emergency management professionals on the critical components of a healthcare emergency management program. The professional standards currently consist of six domains and fourteen competencies healthcare emergency managers should consider when designing and implementing their healthcare emergency management program. Finally, an AHEPP certified healthcare emergency manager (C-HcEM) should understand the concepts of traditional emergency management and how to apply or modify them within the context of healthcare.

Domains

1. Leadership
2. Diversity & Inclusion
3. Preparedness
4. Response
5. Recovery

Competencies

This initial edition of the AHEPP Professional Standards covers the following fourteen competency areas.

1. Awareness / Training
2. Communications
3. Compliance, Law, Regulatory
4. Coordination with Stakeholders
5. Exercise Design & Execution
6. Hazard, Vulnerability, Risk Management
7. Leadership

8. Personnel Management
9. Program Management & Governance
10. Response Operations
11. Social Determinants / Vulnerabilities
12. Strategic Planning
13. Supply Chain Continuity
14. Tools to Facilitate Planning, Response, Recovery, Communications

Future editions of the AHEPP Professional Standards may expand its competencies to include:

- Business Continuity
- Continuity of Care
- Crisis Leadership
- Crisis Standards of Care
- Cybersecurity
- EMR (Electronic Medical Records)
- Evacuations
- Facilities Continuity
- Incident Management
- Information System Disaster Recovery
- International Healthcare Emergency Management
- Mass Casualty
- Patient Revenue / Billing
- Patient Safety

The Professional Domains

This initial edition of the AHEPP Professional Standards includes six domains: Leadership, Diversity & Inclusion, Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, Recovery. Each domain includes program objectives organizations should consider implementing as well as professional competencies each healthcare emergency manager should practice within their organizations.

1. Diversity & Inclusion

- From the recruitment of diverse team members to planning for impacted populations, cultivate a lens and culture of inclusion.
- The healthcare emergency management program is human-centric vs utilitarian.
- EOP should not only address procedures to respond to an emergency, but how to address basic human needs (food, shelter, spiritual, safety, and physical and mental health) for all people in their facilities.

2. Leadership

- Establish the healthcare emergency manager as an essential leader within healthcare leadership team.
- Apply organizational leadership skills to the organization's complex healthcare emergency management program and supporting systems.
- Use their influential leadership to build rapport and trust with internal and external groups essential to the organization's HcEM program.

3. Preparedness

- Design activities to build, sustain, and improve the organization's capability to protect against, respond to, and recover from hazard impacts.
- Identify threats to inform preventive measures and response plans.
- Establish guidelines, protocols, and standards for planning, training and exercise, personnel qualifications and certification, equipment certification, and publication management. (FEMA, 2021)
- Ensures mitigation begins with the prevention and reduction of risks to people and property.
- Designs and implements mitigation strategies to reduce exposures to and the probability of injury, loss, interruptions, and recurrence.
- Employs quantifiable and measurable impact reduction goals based on strategies employed. (FEMA, 2021)

4. Response

- Addresses the direct effects of an incident, save lives, protect property, critical information, technology, and meet inclusive and culturally appropriate basic human needs including sheltering, food, rest, medicine, safety, crisis services.
- Employs emergency operations plans as well as activities designed to limit the loss of life, personal injury, property damage, data loss, and other unfavorable outcomes.
- Applies intelligence and other information to lessen the effects or consequences of an incident, coordinate response activities, activate continuity of care plans, communicate among response teams and to the public. (FEMA, 2021)

5. Recovery

- Designs and implements activities to return the organization to normal operations, for response teams, this includes returning to a state of readiness.
- Creates and supports short and long-term activities to rebuild or establish new operations in the same or different location.
- Rebuilds the capacity of affected organizations including workforce, patients, providers, partners, and leadership. (FEMA, 2021)

Competencies

The AHEPP Professional Standards competencies come from established credible bodies such as National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Centers for Medicaid & Medicare Services (CMS), and the Emergency Management Institute (EMI). An AHEPP certified healthcare emergency manager (C-HcEM) should be able to demonstrate their professional competencies by applying these competencies within a healthcare organization.

1. Awareness & Training

- 1.1 Create a training strategy to educate staff and essential partners of their roles within the emergency management program, all phases of an emergency, and the role of the Incident Command System (ICS).
- 1.2 Explain to non-emergency management stakeholders the role of the ICS or EOC as the liaison/central point of contact during the response and recovery phases.
- 1.3. Train leadership and internal and external stakeholders of their roles within the program.
- 1.4 Provide training opportunities for team members to improve their capacity as emergency managers.
- 1.5 Consider establishing a volunteer Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and provide regular CERT training.

2. Communications

- 2.1 Disseminate accurate need to know information to external / internal stakeholders while addressing rumor control in a professional polished manner.
- 2.2 Applies the lifesaving aspects of communications within a healthcare setting to inform and coordinate with internal / external stakeholders.
- 2.3 Understands the criticality of the technology which supports communications and ensures its security, protection, and availability at all times.

- 2.4 Understands how the external communications plan utilizes social media to inform internal or external stakeholders of a major event's situation and status.
- 2.5 Create a policy which requires all teams to use a centralized communications approach during a response and recovery.
- 2.6 Create a crisis communications plan which informs teams of their actions, describes failures or issues which occurred during a response or recovery, and informs the public while addressing negative public perception.
- 2.7 Ensures the components of a crisis communication plan is designed to gather and disseminate information in order to inform or to provide actionable steps to take.
- 2.8 Develop interoperable and integrated communication strategies to facilitate information sharing during a healthcare emergency.

3. Compliance, Law, Regulatory

- 3.1 Knowledgeable of and applies National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1600 standard within their program.
- 3.2 Knowledgeable of and applies CMS Emergency Preparedness Rule with their program.
- 3.3 Knowledgeable of and applies local, state, and federal regulations as well as organizational standards and policies into their program.

4. Coordination with Stakeholders

- 4.1 Create a stakeholder impact analysis to determine how to engage public and private stakeholders for preparedness, response, and recovery.
- 4.2 Engage executive leadership and external stakeholders in emergency management planning.
- 4.3 Foster collaborative relationships with community leaders, local, state, and federal elected officials to support mutual missions and goals.

5. Exercise Design & Execution

- 5.1 Create and use exercise scenarios to help personnel identify potential challenges and solutions.
- 5.2 Able to create an exercise program which meets the organization's unique vision and mission to deliver safe healthcare during a major interruption or event.

6. Hazard Vulnerability & Risk Management

- 6.1 Performs hazard vulnerability, threat, risk, and capability assessments to identify risks to the organization, people, infrastructure, technologies, and critical functions.
- 6.2 Measures the clinical, political, social, and economic impacts of a major healthcare crisis.
- 6.3 Incorporates the output of risk assessments (e.g., hazard or business impact analysis) and capability assessments into an organization's planning process.
- 6.4 Effectively influences an organization to reduce its vulnerability to hazards and enhance its ability to respond to and recover from incidents.
- 6.5 Effectively employs preventive measures to avoid risks which impact patient care during a major weather event, flooding, cybersecurity event, extended IT outage, or supply chain shortage.

- 6.6 Understands the role enterprise risk management and governance plays in relationship to the healthcare emergency management program.
- 6.7 Create accountability processes to avoid unethical or illegal activities during a response or recovery."
- 6.8 Create a risk management process to ensure emergency management planning is based on realistic risks, threats, and capabilities.

7. Leadership

- 7.1 Knowledgeable about the complexities of the US healthcare system which is a system of organizations that include the healthcare facilities, providers, government agencies, NGOs, payers, employers, community, pharmacies, and third-party companies.
- 7.2 Provides stable leadership while promoting the capabilities of team members, partners, and external stakeholders.
- 7.3 Effectively employs strategies to reduce interpersonal and systemic conflicts.
- 7.4 Understands that depending on the scenario and impact, the ability to be agile and adapt may reduce response and recovery time but should still be methodical and lead to desired outcomes.
- 7.5 Understands that "coordination" requires additional authority and leadership to oversee the activities of each team, vs. "collaboration", where each team may be autonomous in their actions.

8. Personnel Management

- 8.1 Understands the role of healthcare emergency managers in coordinating employees and partners in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from an incident.
- 8.2 Collaborates with leadership and Human Resources to identify the personnel needs of the emergency management program.
- 8.3 All programs and plans include measures to identify and plan for risks and vulnerabilities to the workforce.
- 8.4 Create staff development plans to guide employees interested in pursuing a career in healthcare emergency management.

8.5 Intentionally devise mechanisms to create inclusive hiring practices to support the emergency management program.

9. Program Management & Governance

9.1 Establish and maintain a healthcare emergency management program.

9.1.1 Understands how to apply the phases of emergency management and continuity of care within the program.

9.2 Build an organizational structure with critical and influential stakeholders which integrates the organization's vision, mission, and values into the program.

9.3 Socializes the principles of risk management, social determinants of health, hazard vulnerabilities, inclusive preparedness, and emergency management phases.

9.4 Create a mission statement for the organization's healthcare emergency management program which describes the program's purpose, goals, and priorities.

9.5 Create an organization structure for a healthcare emergency management program which includes goals, objectives, and performance measures.

9.6 Create a campaign to socialize a new healthcare emergency management program to ensure it is implemented throughout the organization.

9.7 Develop and implement a process for evaluating the performance of the healthcare emergency management program.

9.8 Create a program charter that demonstrates your leadership's commitment to the program to prevent, mitigate the consequences of, prepare for, respond to, maintain continuity during, and recover from incidents and includes the following:

9.8.1 support the development, implementation, and maintenance of the program;

9.8.2 provide necessary resources to support the program;

9.8.3 ensure the program is reviewed and evaluated as needed to ensure program effectiveness; and

9.8.4 support corrective action to address program deficiencies.

9.9 Create a governance program to ensure the organization will adhere to policies, execute plans, and follow procedures developed to support the program. (NFPA, 2019)

10. Response Operations

10.1 Develops, implements, and socializes the authorization process prior to declaring a disaster.

10.2 Fosters a collaborative relationship between executive leadership and ICS teams during response operations.

10.3 Knowledgeable of the disaster declaration process.

10.4 Establish procedures that support effective decision making during a crisis/incident.

10.5 Deploys an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) during the response to an incident.

10.6 Knowledgeable of the Incident Command System (ICS) and its role related to coordinating response operations.

10.7 Knowledgeable of the criticality of a healthcare organization's information systems recovery plan as it relates to supporting HcEM, ICS, facilities, infrastructure, patient care and safety.

11. Social Determinants of Health

11.1 Knowledgeable of how social determinants of health, physical or cognitive ability, language, cultural, or economic disparities can inform the strategy, mission, and goals of the healthcare emergency management program.

11.2 Knowledgeable of how FEMA's social vulnerabilities and HHS' social determinants of health influence planning for, responding to, and recovering from an incident.

11.3 Expands social determinants of health, daily living activities, and basic needs to workforce members during the emergency preparedness phase.

11.4 Includes social determinants of health in the hazard vulnerabilities and risk assessment methodology.

12. Strategic Planning

12.1 Develops and supports a strategic plan with the capacity to address all hazards and risks.

12.2 Coordinates and collaborates with clinical, business, and technology functions within the healthcare organization to create an EOP that meets their needs.

12.3 Identifies issues or barriers which can negatively impact the healthcare emergency program and create a strategy to address them.

12.4 Financially supports a HcEM program to ensure its sustainability within the organization.

12.5 Adopts a data driven and local approach vs. a templated approach to risk management which may vary from location to location or risk to risk.

12.6 Emergency management strategic plans and programs are based on risk management principles, including using hazard identification and risk and impact analyses to establish priorities and allocate resources.

12.7 The strategic plan addresses infrastructure, facilities, communications, patient care / safety, clinical outcomes, administration, security, and technology from an all-hazards approach perspective.

12.8 Develops effective strategies to influence leadership and staff to adopt a culture of preparedness across the organization.

13. Supply Chain Continuity

- 13.1 Knowledgeable of the critical role supply chain has in healthcare delivery and ensures this function is sufficiently represented in the healthcare emergency management program.
- 13.2 Understands how supply chain and logistics supports a major event throughout the response and recovery phases.
- 13.3 Knows how to use technology to manage the physical resources of an organization.

14. Tools for Planning, Response, Recovery & Communications

- 14.1 Understands the value of credible intelligence and the source data which informs the program to ensure its protection, security, and integrity.
- 14.2 Understands how to work with the data intelligence community and tools to provide credible information to identify risks and plan for its mitigation, response, and recovery.
- 14.3 Understands how to extrapolate information from the initial and subsequent assessments in order to provide a current state of the situation to team members and leadership.
- 14.4 Understands how innovation, rapid response, or technology can support mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.
- 14.5 Stays current with new methodologies and tools which can improve the program and support all phases of emergency management.

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