

Main Purpose:

The COVID-19 EOC is about coordination and collaboration locally, it is not action oriented. During a pandemic, the main purposes of the emergency operations centre (EOC) are:

- Support the Ministry of Health and Emergency Management BC in execution of their pandemic response plan.
- Provide a coordinated approach between Comox Valley's local governments on business continuity and essential services.

Primary Function:

- Be prepared to support specific requests from Island Health
- Take action if required by Island Health
- Advance Planning Unit is coordinating with other local organizations/stakeholders, monitoring/tracking Ministry of Health, EMBC and Federal Updates; and organizing section unit status reports/action plans.
- Share best practice for Business Continuity Plans between participants
- Establish a consistent regional approach

Secondary Functions:

- Central regional point of contact for anything on COVID-19
- Liaison with applicable agencies and participating members
- Regional communication preparation and review
- Coordination on advance planning, such as:
 - regional government shortage of critical services personnel (HR)
 - facility closures
 - inter-communication and support by request
- Consideration of communication with elected officials

Traditional Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) Model vs. Pandemic Response		
Role/Function	Operational Focused EOC	Pandemic Response EOC
Lead Agency	Local Government (LG) - single or regional depending on scale and scope of incident	Province of BC/EMBC/Ministry of Health/Island Health
Local Government Role	Activate local emergency response plans to support response and recovery from emergency situation.	Support Province of BC, activate local business continuity plans and promote provincial public health campaigns within community.
State of Local Emergency Declarations	A temporary authority measure when LGs are satisfied that an emergency exists or is imminent	Province of BC declared State of Emergency and suspended all local states of emergency.

Traditional Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) Model vs. Pandemic Response		
Role/Function	Operational Focused EOC	Pandemic Response EOC
Policy Groups	One policy group representing LGs. For regional EOC, includes one elected official from each LG	Four policy groups representing each LG supporting the pandemic response and coordination between LGs and community stakeholders.
Elected Official Role	Appointed EOC spokesperson supports all media requests and elected official inquiries. Appointments onto centralized policy group occurs.	Appointed EOC spokesperson supports all media requests. Each LG CAO supports their elected official requests/inquiries.
EOC Lead	EOC Director (usually CAO or alternate)	EOC Director with approval on direction from all four LG CAOs

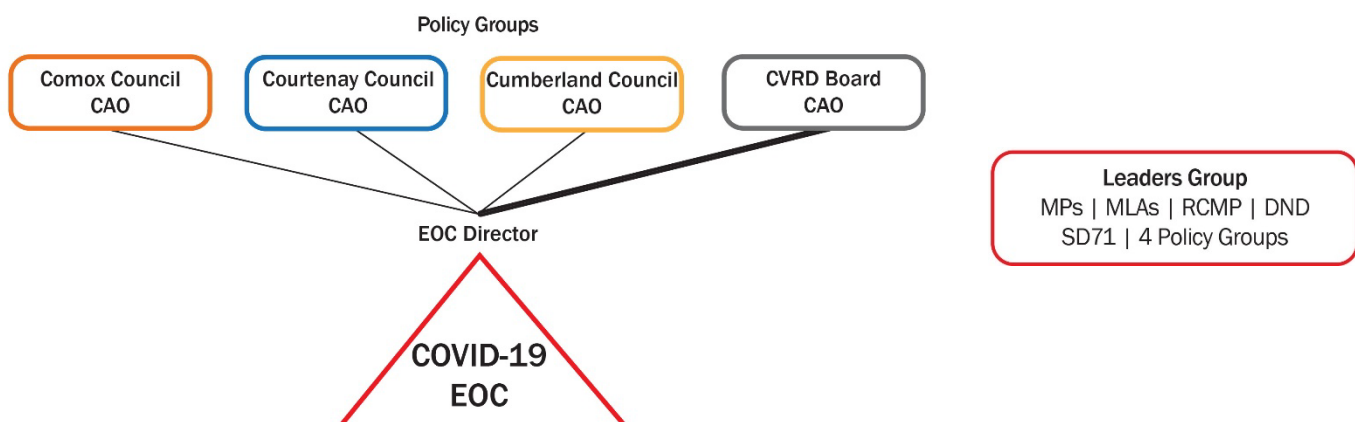
Role of the Policy Groups:

The Policy Groups consist of local Elected Officials and CAOs from the four Comox Valley local governments:

- CVRD Board
- City of Courtenay Council
- Town of Comox Council
- Village of Cumberland Council

The role of the Policy Groups is to provide policy direction to the EOC Director, assist with setting policy, and establish the budget for the EOC. They approve recommendations received from the EOC Director and, where appropriate, the CAOs. **The Policy Groups are not involved in the operation of the EOC or in the response to the actual emergency, and do not directly participate in the EOC unless invited to do so by the EOC Director.**

Elected officials should understand their role in an emergency, and support the expert staff to whom they have provided resources for appropriate training and preparation. This is similar to the B.C. Premier deferring to Dr. Bonnie Henry as the lead on public health decisions.



Communications during a Pandemic:

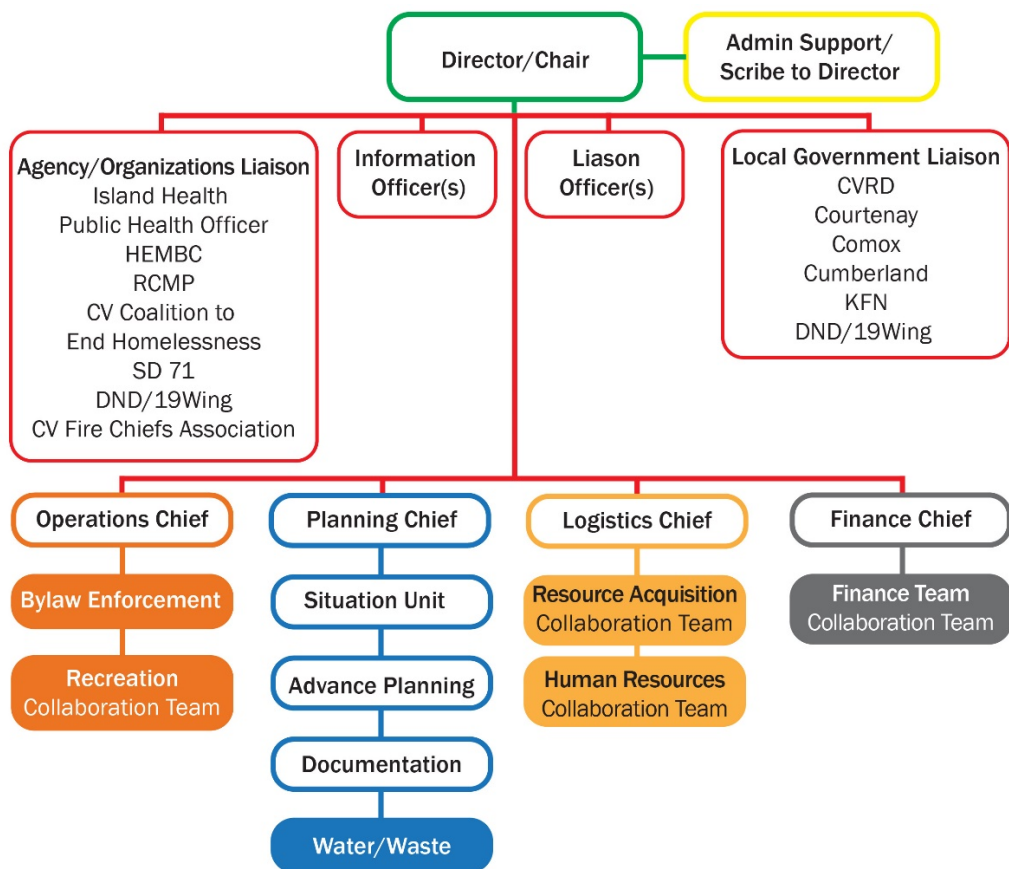
The dissemination of factual information and a regional approach to communications is a priority within the regional EOC. The Information Officers and CAOs will maintain regular communication with the Policy Groups.

EOC operations during a pandemic may be largely driven by actions and announcements from the Province of BC, Island Health, and other external authorities.

Responses to media inquiries will be coordinated through the Information Officers to ensure designated spokespeople have the most up to date information and consistent messaging. If elected officials are contacted directly by media during an emergency, they should make every effort to talk to their CAO prior to conducting any interviews.

In addition to coordinating the external communications with the public during an emergency, the Information Officer supports the elected officials, provides speaking points, arranges media interviews, provides background/follow up information, arranges news conferences and tours, and monitors the media.

COVID-19 EOC Organizational Chart (Subject to change in response to the situation)



K'ómoks First Nation



While each of these positions are filled within the virtual EOC, it is important to note that not all positions are full time and many of the individuals are providing this service off the side of their desk while performing their regular local government duties. The virtual EOC provides this advantage.

What is an emergency?

A present or imminent event or circumstance that;

- a) Is caused by accident, fire, explosion, technical failure or the forces of nature, and
- b) Requires prompt coordination of action or special regulation of persons or property to protect the health, safety or welfare of a person or to limit damage to property

What is an Emergency Operation Centre (EOC)?

Typically, an EOC is a central location from which local governments can coordinate decisions and action plans to support incident response and recovery operations. The Comox Valley Emergency Program (CVEP) provides a regional emergency management service for all CVRD electoral areas. The participation of Town of Comox, City of Courtenay, and Village of Cumberland is by contract.

The CVEP's emergency operations plan follows the four pillars of emergency management:

1. Prevention and mitigation
2. Preparedness
3. Response
4. Recovery

Why has the EOC model been adapted for COVID-19?

Two considerations led to an adapted EOC model for COVID-19:

1. To reduce the risk of transmission between participants by offering a virtual EOC environment. Participants attending the EOC maintain required physical distancing. All others join in by teleconference.
2. A typical local or regional EOC would involve first responders requiring significant support from operations, planning, logistics, and finance for emergencies such as wildfires or floods.

By contrast, the COVID-19 EOC is following the direction of the Province of BC and health authorities as the lead on pandemic or influenza outbreaks. The EOC's purpose is supporting public health measures, communication, and regional collaboration.

When is a State of Local Emergency Declared?

A declaration of a State of Local Emergency (SoLE) is a temporary emergency authority measure authorized by the *Emergency Program Act* when the local government is satisfied that an emergency exists or is imminent.

A declaration is valid for up to seven days.

What are typical considerations for the Policy Group when determining if a SoLE is required?

A local authority would declare a SoLE when an emergency or disaster within its jurisdiction requires access to the extraordinary emergency powers of the Act. A declaration of a SoLE must be made either by a bylaw or resolution (if made by a local authority), or by order (if made by the head of a local authority).

The powers would allow the following actions to respond or alleviate the impacts of an emergency or disaster:

- Acquire or use any land or personal property, services, resources or equipment within the local jurisdiction
- Authorize or require any qualified person to render assistance
- Control or prohibit travel to or from the local jurisdiction
- Support restoring essential facilities and the distribution of essential supplies and provide, maintain and coordinate emergency medical, welfare and other essential services within the local jurisdiction
- Evacuate people, livestock, pets and personal property; make arrangements for their care
- Authorize the entry into any building or property
- Remove of any trees, structures or crops
- Construction works considered necessary or appropriate
- Procure, fix prices for or ration food, clothing, fuel, equipment, medical supplies or other essential supplies

A declaration of a state of local emergency is **NOT** required to;

- Implement part or all of a local Emergency Response Plan, as long as access to emergency powers are not required
- Gain liability protection
- Issue evacuation alerts
- Recover eligible response costs
- Qualify for eligible disaster financial assistance

What tasks would the EOC complete in a typical operational cycle?

- Allocate personnel for EOC staffing and organize for the next shift.
- Monitor regional enforcement activity related to COVID-19 bylaws.
- Determine potential need for accommodation and identify facilities suitable/available those needs respecting the autonomy of local governments.
- Ensure dissemination of information regarding use of public spaces.
- Facilitate interoperability or Water/Waste Water operations across local governments.
- Establish region-wide list of essential businesses required to maintain local government essential services and confirm their capacity to provide support.