



Indiana Department of Homeland Security  
District Planning Council and District Task Force Program Overview

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## **Introduction**

The September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, Hurricane Katrina and the Indian Ocean tsunami have demonstrated the need for effective planning and coordinated emergency responses to large scale disasters. These events also showed that disasters have no boundaries and can have an impact over an entire region.

This is true not only of global or national disasters, but also local emergencies as well. In Indiana, natural disasters like tornadoes, floods and winter storms can impact dozens of counties in a single event. For example, the severe storms and tornadoes of September 20, 2002 affected hundreds of communities in 32 counties. Winter storms have on occasion paralyzed the entire state for days at a time. Indiana must also deal with the growing threats from terrorism, pandemic flu and technological hazards.

In the event of a disaster that affects multiple counties and jurisdictions, coordinating an effective emergency response will be both critically important and incredibly difficult. It will be necessary for multiple agencies, departments and governmental entities to put forth a coordinated effort to save lives and meet the immediate needs of their communities. To assist local emergency responders and government officials, as well as improve overall coordination, the State of Indiana has developed the District Planning Council Program.

## **District Planning Council Program Overview**

Collaboration is the key element in Indiana's Strategy for Homeland Security. To encourage regional cooperation and teamwork, Indiana has been divided into ten Homeland Security Districts. Each District is comprised of multiple counties and the numerous local communities within them. The makeup of each District is unique and can vary considerably from one area to another. Communities within a District can range from rural farmland and small towns to sprawling urban areas, each with vastly different needs, capabilities and resources.

The District Planning Council (DPC) program was developed to assist each of Indiana's ten Homeland Security Districts in planning, organizing and managing critical emergency response activities on a regional basis. It brings together multiple jurisdictions, disciplines and agencies into a formal organizational structure to focus on common strategic goals and objectives.



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The DPC Program consists of two components. The first is the District Planning Council (DPC) itself. Each DPC is made up of local emergency responders, emergency managers and representatives from other key agencies. The DPC is not a response entity, but an organization responsible for developing emergency response strategies, plans and procedures for their district.

The mission of the DPC is focused on accomplishing a core set of goals and objectives:

- Conduct a District Homeland Security and Preparedness Assessment.
- Develop and implement a District Homeland Security Strategy.
- Develop a Crisis Communications and Public Information Plan.
- Develop and implement a District Mutual Aid Agreement.
- Develop and implement a District Training and Exercise Program.
- Sponsor and support District grant and resource coordination.

The second component of the DPC Program is the District Planning Oversight Committee (DPOC). The membership of DPOC will be comprised of the following local officials:

- The President of the County Commissioners for each county in the District.
- The Mayor or Town Board President of the most populated city or town for each county in the District.

The primary mission of the DPOC will be to select the members of the DPC and provide executive oversight, support and guidance for their operations.

### **District Task Forces**

District Task Forces (DTF) are specialized groups of emergency responders that will be strategically located throughout the State of Indiana. Each DTF will consist of teams of specially equipped and trained personnel representing multiple emergency response disciplines. Each DTF will be managed through the cooperative effort of several jurisdictions and will be staffed by personnel from many different agencies.



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The Indiana Department of Homeland Security has identified five core strike team elements that should be represented on each Task Force. These teams include:

- Incident Management
- Search and Rescue
- Hazardous Materials
- Mass Casualty
- Force Protection

While organizational consistency and standardization is the goal, the State recognizes that not all Districts can be staffed and equipped in an identical manner. To account for these issues, three operational levels have been designated; Basic, Intermediate and Advanced. The primary differences between the models will be the size, make up and capabilities of the specialized team elements.

Additional elements, which may already exist within a District, can be incorporated into a DTF organizational structure. For example, a District may have a swift water rescue team or disaster mental health team already in operation. These teams can expand the capabilities of that District and make them a more effective response asset.

**How the DPC and DTF Programs Benefit Local Responders and Elected Officials.**

- Emergency preparedness and response priorities are identified at the local level.
- Projects and programs are developed at the local level based on local priorities.
- Grant funding recommendations are managed through a cooperative process involving local emergency personnel and elected officials.
- Promotes formal district-wide mutual aid agreements and cooperation with non-jurisdictional partners.
- Improves the ability of local governments to respond to large scale emergencies.
- Develops interoperability in processes and equipment among responding agencies.
- Allows for coordination of District training and exercise programs.
- Helps to streamline cost reimbursement process following an incident.
- Encourages cooperation and teamwork across multiple agencies, jurisdictions and disciplines.
- Creates awareness of District-wide needs, capabilities and resources.
- Helps to avoid duplication of effort and maximizes limited local resources.
- Promotes an all-hazards approach to District emergency planning and improves disaster preparedness, response and recovery activities.