

Framework for a Public Health Emergency Operations Centre*

World Health Organization

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In 2013, the Public Health Emergency Operations Centre Network (EOC-NET) of the World Health Organization (WHO) embarked on a project to develop a framework for public health emergency operation centres (EOCs). This included systematic reviews of public health EOCs (PHEOCs) as well as EOC-related plans and procedures; communication technology and infrastructure; minimum datasets and standards; and training and exercises.¹ These were conducted in parallel with two consultation meetings in 2012 and 2015 and a regional workshop to assist in strengthening and networking of PHEOCs in October 2015.¹ The product was the development of this first edition of the Framework for a Public Health Emergency Operations Centre, which is sure to become an essential international resource for disaster management agencies and organisations, including those operating PHEOCs.

The 1st edition of the Framework for a Public Health Emergency Operations Centre is presented as an A4-sized eBook, which is easily downloaded from the WHO website.² The book contains a Table of Contents, Acknowledgements, a section discussing the Use of the Document, an Executive Summary, list of Abbreviations, 11 Sections, including 9 Annexes, References and a list of Collaborators. There is no foreword, preface, list of figures, list of tables, nor an index. Annex 1 is a "Glossary of terms and abbreviations". The WHO describes the PHEOC as integrating "traditional public health services and other functions into an emergency management model".² The WHO further indicates the purposes of the framework as outlining "the key concepts and essential requirements for developing and managing a PHEOC" and for "developing and managing a PHEOC in order to achieve a goal-oriented response to public health emergencies and unity of effort among response agencies".²

The primary target audience of the Framework for a Public Health Emergency Operations Centre is stated to be intended to be used by "practitioners of public health; health policy makers; and authorities and agencies responsible for managing emergencies, incidents, or events where the health of populations

is at risk" (p 1). It further indicates that this document provides for "high-level methodical guidance for designing, developing, and strengthening of public health emergency operations centres" (p 1). It would also be a useful reference for those undertaking postgraduate studies in disaster health management or for those working more broadly with disaster management organisations, so that they can better appreciate the role of PHEOCs.

The main Sections of the Framework for a Public Health Emergency Operations Centre include "1. Introduction"; "2. About the PHEOC framework"; "3. Concept of the PHEOC"; "4. PHEOC planning guidance"; "5. Management of public health emergencies"; "6. Implementing a PHEOC"; "7. Training and exercises"; "8. Monitoring and evaluation"; "9. Costing, funding and sustaining a PHEOC"; "10. Checklists for planning and implementing a PHEOC"; and "11. Annexes". The Annexes include

"1. Glossary of terms and abbreviations"; "2: Sample concept of operations (CONOPS)"; "3: PHEOC systems and infrastructure requirements"; "4: Example of a PHEOC minimum data set"; "5: Representation of minimum dataset for PHEOCs"; "6: Required knowledge, skills and abilities for essential PHEOC functions"; "7: Types of exercise"; "8: Exercise selection criteria"; and "9: Checklist for planning and implementing a PHEOC". By far the biggest Section of the main document (excluding Annexes) is Section "6. Implementing a PHEOC" (pp 18-30) and the Annex "9: Checklist for planning and implementing a PHEOC" is amongst the numerous practical features in this book. The Glossary in Annex 1 is a "must read" for those wanting to understand the terminology and abbreviations used in relation to disasters and PHEOCs (pp 36-43). It will be interesting to see whether it will need revision in the near future as it becomes used and field tested by various disaster agencies and organisations globally.

While the writing group and publisher of the Framework for a Public Health Emergency Operations Centre is the WHO, there are actually many WHO

staff and experts who have contributed to the various phases of this work from various countries, as well as from the WHO Office in Geneva. The numerous contributors are listed in the section at the end of the book entitled Collaborators (pp 72-74).

The Framework for a Public Health Emergency Operations Centre is a compact, succinct and easy to read publication. It appears to be the first publication of its type by the WHO concerning PHEOCs. It will be a useful international reference for those developing national disaster management guidelines and

forming PHEOCs, but it doesn't replace standard textbooks of disaster health management. This 1st edition of the Framework for a Public Health Emergency Operations Centre is sure to become a highly accessed WHO eBook.

Declaration of Interests

The reviewer was an acknowledged contributor to this publication (specifically the systematic reviews' expert teams).

References

1. World Health Organization, Public Health Emergency Operations Centre Network. Home page. URL. http://www.who.int/ihr/eoc_net/en/index7.html (accessed 29 November 2015)
2. World Health Organization, Public Health Emergency Operations Centre Network. Framework for a Public Health Emergency Operations Centre. URL. http://www.who.int/ihr/publications/9789241565134_eng/en/ (accessed 29 November 2015)

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