



## **OFFICE OF THE CHAMPAIGN COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

1776 East Washington Street, Urbana, Illinois 61802-4581

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**Darlene A. Kloepfel, County Executive**

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Date: March 25, 2020

Re: County Emergency Operations Plan

In central Illinois, most county-level disasters happen when a tornado strikes or significant flooding occurs. Less frequently, officials and emergency responders must also be prepared for accidents involving hazardous materials, train/plane crashes or, as is happening now, an infectious disease pandemic. They do this through planning and training ahead. Having a current Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) means less delay getting started on important decisions.

Champaign County's EOP swings into action when a local disaster is declared. The County Executive made the initial declaration on March 13, and the County Board extended this to April 30. Since then, the President and Governor have extended the national and statewide time periods beyond this date.

The county's Emergency Management Agency (EMA) Coordinator establishes an Emergency Operations Center (EOC), where an Incident Commander is named. Committees for policy, operations, logistics, communication, planning and finance are established quickly to obtain and distribute appropriate resources, manage paperwork and budgets, and keep the public informed.

Different types of situations call for different resources, and the local plan outlines a structure for decisions to be made that includes leaders from jurisdictions that may be involved. For the COVID-19 pandemic, the Emergency Operations team has included a broad array of officials representing public health, the county, municipalities, major health providers, public transit, the U of I and Parkland, Regional Office of Education, National Guard, United Way, Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Corporation. Daily updates on the activities of each level of response and committee work are provided through the EOC.

A disaster declaration also qualifies the county to apply later for any partial expense reimbursements that may be available from state and federal agencies for disaster relief. Because both the state and the entire United States have declared a disaster for the COVID-19 event, some of these steps have been eliminated for counties and municipalities and additional financial resources have been made widely available to workers, businesses, states and emergency responders.

A pandemic is different from a single event natural disaster in that the effects are more widespread and the "crisis" phase can be sporadic and longer. In all cases, a full recovery often

takes months or years to re-build infrastructure and heal from the emotional and economic impact. While federal and state emergency supports withdraw after declaring the emergency “over”, community governments, businesses and non-profits continue with recovery operations for as long as it takes to restore regional stability again. Before disbanding, the EOC also develops a plan for both short-term and long-term recovery stages of the disaster.