



# Standard Operating Guide

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Planning Section, Situation Unit

Planning Section

3/14/2014

**I. Situation Unit Overview:** The primary mission of the Situation Unit is to sift through all available information, extract the most important and relevant parts and then process it, so that it becomes useful and actionable information for the SERT. During any event, a great deal of information flows through the SEOC. The sheer volume of information can sometimes mask important information and make it difficult to see an accurate picture of the event. Personnel assigned to the Situation Unit will gather information from all sources including, but not limited to:

- EMC Constellation: EMC is the primary source of information from local jurisdictions and state agencies.
- Reconnaissance (RECON) reports: Observations from the RECON teams are gathered in RECON reports.
- Open sources (News Media, Social Media, other internet sources).

Once the information is gathered (read, viewed, or monitored) it will be processed into an organized, concise, and useful format such as:

- Status maps/Map layers
- Written assessments/briefings
- Oral assessments/briefings

These products should provide the SERT with the best available “snapshot” of the situation in the impacted area and if possible, highlight potential (future) impacts.

## **II. Situation Unit Organization:**

- A. The Situation Unit is a unit of ESF 5/SERT Planning Section and under the direction of the Planning Section Chief (PSC).
- B. The Situation Unit Leader is responsible for the operation of the unit.

## **III. SEOC Activation and Situation Unit Mobilization:**

- A. Upon activation of the SERT Planning Section, the Situation Unit will assemble and begin operations.
- B. The Planning Section Chief will direct the Situation Unit Leader when to report to the SEOC.

- C. Upon notification that the SEOC has been activated, the Situation Unit Leader will coordinate with the Planning Section Chief for any additional unit staffing.
- D. The Situation Unit Leader will ensure that the Situation Unit room is prepared for use.
- E. The Situation Unit Leader will coordinate with the Planning Section Chief for information and reporting requirements. This information will be passed along to the remainder of the Situation Unit.
- F. When directed by the PSC, the Situation Unit will begin the RECON planning process.
- G. A representative of the Situation Unit will attend all SEOC briefings and conference calls.

#### **IV. Standard Situation Unit Actions during a Shift:**

- A. Read the last two SERT Situation Reports (Sitreps). Be aware of what it covers and what it does not.
- B. Read the last two Sitreps for the affected counties. Extract information that is not contained in the SERT Sitrep. Is there any information there that would help to indicate trends? This might be reports of flooding, wind damage, tornadoes, or other unique situations.
- C. Look through the most recent EMC requests from each county. Do the requests show any trends, or indicate any unique issues in the county.
- D. Read the most recent recon reports. Do the recon reports support any trends that might have shown up in the county Sitreps or requests? If not, do the recon reports themselves show any trends? Can they be analyzed on the map to show where there is flooding, wind damage, storm surge, etc.? Do they help define the edges of the impact area?
- E. Check webcams/beach cams, traffic cams/FDOT traffic counter data (if traffic counters are activated). Do they support any of the trends that are developing? Do they show any conflicting information?
- F. Check social media. Do key word searches on twitter (e.g., “flood” or “flooded”) result in tweets that support or conflict with trends already established? Does content on the major weather blogs add anything? Are there social media pages of local meteorologists or reporters that might have information on impacts? Volunteer groups (social media pages and webpages) may be another source of information. They may post assessments and intended actions that might be useful.
- G. Combine what you have gathered into a trend analysis or report that is useful/actionable (See Table 1).
- H. Update the Essential Elements of Information status (EEI in EM Constellation and/or the Primary Indicators Tool web portal) at least twice per hour—or more depending on the situation.
  - 1. Coordinate with the Planning Section/Technical Services Unit to ensure status maps and map layers are updated to reflect the most current situation. This should be done once each update is completed.

- I. Prepare Situation briefings for Planning Section Chief.
  - 1. This should be done at a minimum of twice per shift—at least 1 hour prior to the morning and evening briefings.
  - 2. Include status maps of county actions, Recon activities, and other information as deemed necessary.
  - 3. Include, if applicable, an intelligence forecast based upon information received and any analyzed trends.
  - 4. Be prepared to provide any “as-needed” oral or written briefings to the PSC or any entities in the SEOC.
  
- J. Cross-check information with the Planning Section/Documentation Unit to ensure consistent information distribution.
  
- K. Repeat the Process. This will be a continuous process throughout the event.

Recording findings: The following table (Table 1) is an example of how to record/organize the findings. In the example below, the information recorded suggests that the major impacts were storm surge and wind damage in the westernmost counties, that Okaloosa may have less damage, and that there is an increase in inland flooding in Walton County. *Note that the chart is for internal Situation Unit use only.*

Table 1

<b>County</b>	<b>Co. Sitrep</b>	<b>EMC requests</b>	<b>Recon reports</b>	<b>Webcams</b>	<b>Social media</b>	<b>Volunteer</b>
<b>Escambia</b>	Indicates major storm surge and wind damage	Recent requests for SAR and boats for barrier islands	Coastal roads flooded or washed out	Almost all the resort beach cams are offline	Twitter and weather blogs indicate major electrical outages. Tweepers are working off phone battery only. Reports of major storm surge damage on barrier islands	Team Rubicon originally planned to focus its efforts on the Florida panhandle, but is considering shifting west to Alabama and possibly Mississippi
<b>Santa Rosa</b>	Indicates major storm surge and wind damage	Recent requests for SAR and boats for barrier islands	Coastal roads flooded or washed out	Most beach cams offline, but some still active.	Twitter and weather blogs indicate that all coastal areas without power, spotty information in northern sections	Same as above
<b>Okaloosa</b>	Moderate storm surge and wind damage	Fewer requests from Okaloosa than from the other counties; may indicate less damage in general.	Downed trees and some coastal flooding	About half the beach cams up	inconclusive	Nothing to report
<b>Walton</b>	Recent increase in inland flooding, may be associated with the heavy rain bands, less wind damage	Increased requests in last few hours for sandbags	Inland flooding, local road closures due to flooding	Most beach cams still up and show only moderate beach erosion.	Tweepers and bloggers in the area still have power, and reporting heavier damage in the counties to the west	Nothing to report

**V. Demobilization:**

- A. The Situation Unit Leader will coordinate with the Planning Section Chief to maintain appropriate staffing.
- B. Demobilization of the Situation Unit will be at the direction of the Planning Section Chief.
- C. A representative of the Situation Unit will attend all SEOC After-Action Report (AAR) meetings.

**VI. Attachments:**

- A. Reconnaissance Standard Operating Guide
- B. Situation Unit Job Aids
  - 1. Recon Reporting Tool Job Aid
  - 2. Recon Triage Job Aid
  - 3. Primary Indicators Tool Job Aid



# Standard Operating Guide

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Recon

Planning Section

3/14/2014



## I. Recon Overview:

A. The purpose of the State Emergency Response Team (SERT) Recon is to provide information and situational awareness to the State of Florida Emergency Operations Center. Recon reports—once triaged—are displayed in GATOR as part of the SERT Common Operating Picture (COP).

B. Recon is conducted immediately after an event or during if conditions allow. **Important Note: The Recon function is different from the Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs) conducted by SERT Recovery.** The SERT Recon mission is intended to get actual field observers into the impacted area to report or verify the actual conditions.

C. Determining impacted areas in the most need, the SERT can focus the response on the areas that may be the most difficult to Search, Secure, and Stabilize.

D. The goal is to present the best available “snapshot” of the situation in the impacted area. If possible the “picture” should:

1. Show the edges of the impacted area
2. Show the most heavily damaged areas
3. Highlight areas that might be overlooked
4. Highlight potential (future) impacts

## II. Recon Organization:

A. The Recon mission is coordinated through the SERT Planning Section’s Situation Unit (see Planning Section SOG for organization chart).

B. Participating agencies: Although flexible, the following is a list of the agencies that participate in the Recon mission (either with actual recon teams or by providing planners).

1. Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission—Division of Law Enforcement
2. Florida Army National Guard
3. Civil Air Patrol
4. Florida Division of Emergency Management

## 5. Florida Department of Transportation

C. General responsibilities: Each of the agencies is responsible for the planning, conduct, safety and reporting of their respective teams. Though they are all working in support of the SERT and take direction from the SERT chief (through the Planning Section/Situation Unit) they maintain significant autonomy in the conduct of their Recon missions.

D. Recon Planning Cell: The planning cell will be comprised of a representative from all agencies that will deploy Recon teams into the impacted area. The planning cell will coordinate staging areas, initial entry plans, target lists and overall objectives with the Planning Section Chief. Additionally, the planning cell will continue to coordinate and report the locations and actions of the Recon teams throughout the event.

### **III. SEOC Activation and Recon Mobilization:**

A. If there is adequate notice of an impending event, the Planning Section Chief or the Situation Unit Leader will contact those partner agencies that may be needed for the Recon mission. If there is little to no notice, the Planning Section Chief or the Situation Unit Leader will make contact with those agency Recon points of contact as soon as possible. This is not to be considered an activation of Recon, but only coordination to facilitate a smooth activation if needed.

B. Upon approval by the SERT Chief, the Planning Section Chief will enter the initial mission request to begin Recon operations. This initial message will be the overall mission number used to track SERT Recon operations. Subsequent requests will be entered as supporting missions under this initial Recon mission.

C. Recon Reporting Tool: The Situation Unit Leader will ensure that the appropriate "EVENT" has been opened in the Recon Reporting Tool and that all usernames and passwords are coordinated with the Recon Planning Cell.

D. EMC messages: As the physical movement of personnel and equipment has a fiscal cost, each request (mission) involving personnel and equipment must be initiated with a mission request in EMC. The below listed EMC messages are the minimum required to begin Recon operations.

1. Initial Recon mission request (the master mission): Initiated by Planning Section Chief.
  - a) *Sample Text: At the direction of the SERT Chief ESF 5 will begin Recon Operations. This mission authorizes the stand-up of Recon planners/teams as required. All Recon operations and subsequent requests should be entered as supporting missions.*
2. Requests for Recon planners: Each request will be entered as a supporting mission.
  - a) *Sample Text: The SERT is requesting one (1) (agency name) Recon planner. The planner should be familiar with the (agency name) Recon procedures, organization and equipment. The planner should report to the SEOC NLT XXXX HRS on XX/XX/XXXX. Planner should be prepared to work for a minimum of XX (X) days and should be prepared to assist with the initial Recon plan and coordinate assignments for field observers.*
3. Requests to stand up Recon teams: EMC mission requests for each agency to stand up and move teams into staging areas.
  - a) *Sample Text: The SERT is requesting that (agency name) stand up (number) Recon teams. Please coordinate staging areas and initial routes / assignments with the Situation Unit Recon Planning Cell.*
4. The EMC missions above are all subject to the specific needs of the SERT for a given event. The timing of the messages may change and some may be omitted. The SERT Chief is the approval authority for all EMC missions requiring the movement of personnel and equipment.

#### **IV. Pre-impact:**

- A. The Recon Planning Cell will finalize initial entry plans and refine target lists based on coordination with County Emergency Managers and guidance from the SERT Chief.
- B. Recon teams will move to their planned staging areas and wait for safe conditions to begin operations.

## **V. Post-impact:**

- A. The Recon Planning Cell will coordinate the initial entry of the Recon teams as soon as local conditions are acceptable. The safety of the Recon team members will always be the overriding consideration for when to begin Recon operations.
- B. Location and status of Recon teams will be tracked and reported using the Recon mapping tool. Recon planners will assist the Situation Unit Leader in ensuring that the location and status of the Recon teams and equipment are kept current.
- C. Recon reports: Recon reports will be entered into the Recon reporting tool. Usernames and passwords will be established prior to the event and will be verified by the Recon Planning Cell.
- D. Recon Report Triage: All Recon reports will be “Triaged” (reviewed for accuracy) before they are released. It is the triage process that uploads the Recon reports to GATOR; however, it is also intended to ensure that report locations (geocoordinates) are correct and that only accurate and useful information is sent to GATOR for display.

## **VI. Demobilization:**

- A. The length of time that Recon teams are active in the impacted area will vary depending on the event. The Situation Unit Leader will work with the Recon Planning Cell to develop recommendations to maintain the appropriate number of Recon teams to support the mission (“right sizing”). Demobilization of the Recon teams will be coordinated by the Planning Section Chief and the Recon Planning Cell.
- B. Each agency is responsible for tracking its own expenditures/cost and for filing for reimbursements.