

Stakeholder Toolkit

FEMA Region 3 Regional Business Emergency Operations Center (RBEOC)

The Bottom Line

Staying connected to the right partners can make a big difference when you're trying to keep your business operating after a disaster, or you want to prepare your employees and customers for an emergency. In 2015, FEMA Region 3 created the Regional Business Emergency Operations Center (RBEOC) to formally enhance communication and engagement with the private sector and relevant public sector partners throughout the disaster lifecycle, including pre-disaster preparedness, disaster response, and post-disaster recovery.

This toolkit will explain to you how the RBEOC works, how it's implemented, how it operates outside of times of activation, and how you can promote and join the RBEOC.

Both private and public sector organizations are invited to join!

Join the RBEOC by signing and returning the Membership Agreement, which you can find at <https://www.fema.gov/region-iii-rbeoc>. Membership is free, voluntary, and open to all members of the public and private sectors. By becoming a member, you'll join our network of trusted partners and will receive regular updates, event invitations, and preparedness resources from us.

The Membership Agreement includes the terms and conditions for participation in the RBEOC. Any questions should be directed to FEMA Region 3 Private Sector Liaison Melissa Wiehenstroer at melissa.wiehenstroer@fema.dhs.gov.

Overview

As we count down the days to National Preparedness Month this September, Region 3 is taking a bit of a detour to promote a program that brings both public and private entities together under one umbrella to promote collaboration, assistance, and situational awareness among its members.

The RBEOC brings together hundreds of public and private sector stakeholders across our region to actively maintain two-way communication with one another before, during, and after disasters. The FEMA Region 3 Private Sector Liaison manages the RBEOC and sends updates, event invitations, preparedness resources, and other information with members throughout the year.

During activations, RBEOC members receive regular situational awareness updates and invitations to join daily coordination calls at the regional or national level, depending on the scope of the incident. These calls are an opportunity for RBEOC members to hear from leadership about incident response, ask questions, and share their own needs, concerns and capabilities.

The RBEOC also serves as an essential conduit between the National Business Emergency Operations Center (NBEOC) and state-level BEOCs and ensures that information and inquiries are shared with the appropriate contacts.

How Does the RBEOC Work?

The RBEOC is formally activated upon the direction of regional leadership and is managed by the FEMA Region 3 Private Sector Liaison/RBEOC Director. The RBEOC has activated in response to multiple hurricanes, various National Security Special Events and mostly recently, in response to COVID-19. The RBEOC has also been “activated” during agency-wide exercises, providing an opportunity for FEMA Region 3 and our stakeholders to practice our communication and coordination in a certain scenario to gather best practices and lessons learned so we can be better prepared for real-world incidents.

In an activation, RBEOC members are invited to participate in daily calls to hear incident updates from Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC) leadership, appropriate



Panel discussion with private sector partners from Boeing, Sanofi Pasteur, Airbnb, and Mid-Atlantic FIRST at the 2019 Private Sector Readiness Day.

Emergency Support Function (ESF) partners, and affected state partners. The RBEOC director also collects needs, capabilities, concerns and updates from members and shares them within the RRCC and with appropriate partners. These updates may include availability of essential commodities, store open-closed statuses, supply chain concerns, and other mission essential priorities.

as preparedness tips and initiatives, upcoming events and trainings, and opportunities to participate in regional exercises with RBEOC members.

During a non-disaster period, the FEMA Region 3 private sector liaison shares information such

What events can RBEOC members participate in?

For the past several years, Private Sector Readiness Day has been FEMA Region 3’s annual event to bring together RBEOC members for a day of presentations, discussions and a tabletop exercise.

In February 2020, we hosted Private Sector Readiness Day at RBEOC member Holy Family University’s campus in Newtown, PA. More than 90 attendees attended the event, including

banks, grocery stores, and utility companies, as well state and local emergency management agencies.

The focus of the day was on a region-wide long-term power outage, and the first panel of the day consisted of representatives from electric and communications companies to brief participants about their capabilities and concerns in such an incident and to kick off the discussion about what other businesses can do to mitigate their risk. Following that panel, participants were divided into smaller group discussions based on which Community Lifelines (lifelines are the most fundamental services in the community that, when stabilized, enable all other aspects of society to function) they are most closely aligned with to discuss their priorities, needs and capabilities in the immediate days following a widespread power outage.

After lunch, participants were mixed up into different groups to share outcomes from their morning discussions and to consider what their needs and actions would be weeks into a long-



Attendees listen to a plenary session at the 2020 Private Sector Readiness Day at Holy Family University.

term outage. To round out the day we also featured a presentation about cybersecurity for businesses from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and a panel about opportunities for businesses to engage with emergency management and public information sharing networks at the local level.

Private Sector Readiness Day

provides a great opportunity not only for our partners to learn from one another and from emergency managers, but for us to learn from them and make sure we are incorporating the priorities, needs, capabilities and concerns of our partners into our response planning efforts.

Large in-person gatherings are unfortunately not feasible in a COVID-19 environment, so for 2021 we are planning smaller, virtual gatherings of private sector stakeholders to have focused discussions on specific [community lifelines](#). Become a member of the RBEOC to learn more about these upcoming events, provide feedback, and have the first opportunity to register to participate.

Sample Tweets to Promote the RBEOC

We are always looking to grow our network of trusted partners and would appreciate your help in spreading the word about the RBEOC.

- Are you a member of the private sector? Do you want to help others before, during & after a disaster? Join the FEMA Region 3 Regional Business Emergency Operations Center (RBEOC) @ <http://bit.ly/2tUWUEN>
- Did you know the FEMA Region 3 Regional Business Emergency Operations Center (RBEOC) has annual tabletop exercises and other events? Join today to learn more! <http://bit.ly/2tUWUEN>
- FEMA Region 3 brings private and public partners together to assist with disaster operations. Join the Regional Business Emergency Operations Center (RBEOC) today @ <http://bit.ly/2tUWUEN>
- FEMA Region 3's Regional Business Emergency Operations Center (RBEOC) has dozens of partnership success stories. Want to be involved? Click <http://bit.ly/2tMhTJM> for details
- Don't keep your organization in the dark. Receive incident updates and more by joining the Regional Business Emergency Operations Center (RBEOC) <http://bit.ly/2tUWUEN>
- Want your organization to participate in an exercise with FEMA Region 3? Join the Regional Business Emergency Operations Center (RBEOC) today to get involved! <http://bit.ly/2tUWUEN>

Conclusion

The private sector has a critical role to play in every disaster and the sky is the limit when it comes to creative ways we can work together. Consider the following examples:

- **Outdoor Advertising Association of America** shared safety messaging on their billboards along evacuation routes in Virginia in advance of Hurricane Florence's landfall.
- **National Grid, Northeast Gas Association, and Bay State Gas Company** printed disaster assistance information at the bottom of utility bills being sent out to customers and on their website landing pages. More than 450,000 Rhode Island residents had a reason to actually appreciate receiving a bill.
- **Home Depot, Safeway** – The emergency management adage goes “we don't want to set up a food distribution center in the parking lot of a store that has reopened.” That's duplicative. But Home Depot and Safeway demonstrated that their parking lots could be used for other services like recovery centers. *That's* complementary and collaborative.
- **Sony** – One of the most traumatic moments a parent can face is when they are standing in a disaster recovery center, applying for assistance, as they look into the eyes of their children and see despair. But that didn't happen at some of the recovery centers in the south when they were recovering from severe weather across the region, because the children were too busy watching Sony big-screen TVs and playing on Sony PlayStations.
- **Employee Volunteers - Business Executives for National Security (BENS)** brought more than 1,000 volunteers to western Alabama to respond to multiple tornados. The Retail

Industry Leaders Association (RILA) hosted more than 250 volunteers to help with a large-scale clean-up in Joplin, MO. There is power in numbers and there is human kindness in these associations.

...and the examples don't stop there. Forming, molding, exercising, and perfecting that private-public-federal partnership gives our communities a leg up during all facets of the disaster lifecycle. Businesses are vital parts of a community and by working together, we can improve the resilience of our communities and improve the effectiveness of the response and recovery process.



One of the creative ways we partnered with the private sector to spread important information during Hurricane Florence.

Joining the RBEOC is one step you can take to make a difference within our communities.

We ask that you promote this opportunity far and wide by sharing with your community partners, businesses (small and large), universities, and whomever else you believe would benefit from membership in this group.