



The Joint Commission

Accreditation Program: Laboratory
Emergency Management

Standard EM.01.01.01

The laboratory engages in planning activities prior to developing its Emergency Operations Plan.

Note: An emergency is an unexpected or sudden event that significantly disrupts the laboratory's environment of care or its ability to provide services. At times, an emergency results in a sudden, increased demand for the laboratory's services. Emergencies can be either human-made or natural (such as an electrical system failure or a tornado), or a combination of both, and they exist on a continuum of severity. A disaster is a type of emergency that, due to its complexity, scope, or duration, threatens the laboratory's capabilities and requires outside assistance to sustain patient care, safety, or security functions.

Rationale for EM.01.01.01

An emergency can suddenly and significantly affect demand for the laboratory's services or its ability to provide those services. Therefore, the laboratory needs to engage in planning activities that prepare it to form the Emergency Operations Plan. These activities include identifying risks, prioritizing likely emergencies, attempting to mitigate them when possible, and considering its potential emergencies in developing strategies for preparedness. Because some emergencies that impact a laboratory originate in the community, the laboratory needs to take advantage of opportunities, where they exist, to collaborate with relevant parties in the community.

Elements of Performance for EM.01.01.01

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| 1. | The laboratory's leaders participate in planning activities prior to developing an Emergency Operations Plan. | A |
| 2. | The laboratory identifies potential emergencies and the direct and indirect effects that these emergencies may have on the need for its services or its ability to provide those services. (See also IC.01.06.01, EP 4)
Note 1: Some organizations refer to this process as a hazard vulnerability analysis (HVA).
Note 2: The potential of an emergency situation stemming from a surge in infectious patients is addressed in the "Infection Prevention and Control" (IC) chapter. | A |
| 3. | The laboratory prioritizes the potential emergencies it has identified. | A |
| 4. | The laboratory, either as an independent organization or as part of another organization, communicates its needs and vulnerabilities to community emergency response agencies and identifies the community's capability to meet its needs.
Note: A laboratory, either as part of an accredited organization or as an independent organization, may communicate and integrate with the National Incident Management System, the Laboratory Response Network, or other planning and response entities serving its community. | A |
| 5. | The laboratory uses its prioritized emergencies as a basis for defining mitigation activities (that is, activities designed to reduce the risk of and potential damage from an emergency).
Note: Mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery are the four phases of emergency management. They occur over time: Mitigation and preparedness generally occur before an emergency, and response and recovery occur during and after an emergency. | A |
| 6. | The laboratory uses its prioritized emergencies as a basis for defining the preparedness activities that will organize and mobilize essential resources. (See also IM.01.01.03, EPs 1-4) | A |

KEY: **A** indicates scoring category A; **C** indicates scoring category C; **2** indicates situational decision rules apply; **3** indicates direct impact requirements apply; **M** indicates Measure of Success if needed; **D** indicates that documentation is required

Standard EM.02.01.01

The laboratory has an Emergency Operations Plan.

Note 1: The laboratory's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) is designed to coordinate its communications, resources and assets, security, staff responsibilities, utilities, and patient clinical and support activities during an emergency (refer to Standards EM.02.02.01, EM.02.02.03, EM.02.02.05, EM.02.02.07, EM.02.02.09, and EM.02.02.11). Although emergencies have many causes, the effects on these areas of the organization and the required response effort may be similar. This "all hazards" approach supports a general response capability that is sufficiently nimble to address a range of emergencies of different duration, scale, and cause. For this reason, the Plan's response procedures address the prioritized emergencies but are also adaptable to other emergencies that the organization may experience.

Note 2: If the laboratory is part of a Joint Commission–accredited organization that meets the requirements of this chapter, the laboratory is not required to have a separate Emergency Operations Plan; however, the laboratory is required to follow a plan, either as part of the overall organizational plan or as a plan specific to the laboratory.


Rationale for EM.02.01.01

A successful response effort relies on a comprehensive and flexible Emergency Operations Plan that guides decision making at the onset of an emergency and as an emergency evolves. Although the Emergency Operations Plan can be designed in a variety of ways, it must address response procedures that are both applicable to the laboratory's likely emergencies and adaptable in supporting key areas (such as communications and utilities) that could be affected by different types of emergencies. Laboratories that are in hospitals will work collaboratively with the hospital to develop an Emergency Operations Plan that effectively coordinates their respective responsibilities for mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

Elements of Performance for EM.02.01.01

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| 1. | The laboratory's leaders participate in the development of the Emergency Operations Plan. | A |
| 2. | <p>D The laboratory has a written Emergency Operations Plan that describes the response procedures to follow when emergencies occur.</p> <p>Note: The response procedures address the prioritized emergencies but can also be adapted to other emergencies that the laboratory may experience. Response procedures could include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Maintaining or expanding services - Conserving resources - Curtailing services - Relocating services to an alternative site - Supplementing resources from outside the local community - Closing the laboratory to new patients - Staged evacuation - Total evacuation | A |
| 4. | <p>D The laboratory has a written Emergency Operations Plan that describes the recovery strategies, actions, and individual responsibilities necessary to restore the laboratory's services after an emergency.</p> | A |

KEY: **A** indicates scoring category A; **C** indicates scoring category C; **2** indicates situational decision rules apply; **3** indicates direct impact requirements apply; **M** indicates Measure of Success if needed; **D** indicates that documentation is required

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| 5. | The Emergency Operations Plan describes the processes for initiating and terminating the laboratory's response and recovery phases of the emergency, including under what circumstances these phases are activated.
Note: Mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery are the four phases of emergency management. They occur over time: Mitigation and preparedness generally occur before an emergency, and response and recovery occur during and after an emergency. | A |
| 6. | The Emergency Operations Plan identifies the individual(s) responsible for activating the response and recovery phases of the emergency response.
Note: Although a primary individual should be designated by role or title, an alternative individual may also be identified to assume this responsibility should the primary individual not be available at the time of an emergency. | A |
| 8. | If the laboratory experiences an actual emergency, the laboratory implements its response procedures related to laboratory services for its patients. |  A |

Standard EM.02.02.01





As part of its Emergency Operations Plan, the laboratory prepares for how it will communicate during emergencies.

Rationale for EM.02.02.01

The laboratory maintains reliable communication capabilities and channels for the purpose of communicating response efforts to staff and external organizations. The laboratory establishes backup communication processes and technologies (for example, cell phones, landlines, bulletin boards, fax machines, satellite phones, Amateur Radio, text messages) to communicate essential information if primary communications systems fail.

Elements of Performance for EM.02.02.01

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| 1. | The Emergency Operations Plan describes how staff and licensed independent practitioners (such as pathologists) will be notified when emergency response procedures have been initiated. | A |
| 3. | The Emergency Operations Plan describes how the laboratory will notify external authorities that emergency response measures have been initiated. | A |
| 14. | The laboratory establishes backup communication systems or technologies for use in the event that internal or external systems fail during an emergency. | A |
| 17. | The laboratory implements the components of its Emergency Operations Plan that require advance preparation to support communications during an emergency.
Note: Some components of the Emergency Operations Plan are not implemented unless an emergency is imminent. Other components, however, can and should be implemented in advance so that the laboratory is as prepared as possible. | A |

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Standard EM.02.02.03

As part of its Emergency Operations Plan, the laboratory prepares for how it will manage resources and assets during emergencies.

Rationale for EM.02.02.03

The laboratory that continues to provide laboratory services during emergencies needs to determine how resources and assets (that is, supplies, equipment, and facilities) will be managed internally and, when necessary, solicited and acquired from external sources such as vendors, neighboring health care providers, other community organizations, state affiliates, or a regional parent company. The laboratory should also recognize the risk that some resources may not be available from planned sources, particularly in emergencies of long duration or broad geographic scope. This situation may occur when multiple laboratories are vying for a limited supply from the same vendor.

Elements of Performance for EM.02.02.03

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| 2. | For laboratories that plan to provide service during an emergency: The Emergency Operations Plan describes how the laboratory will obtain and replenish laboratory reagents and related supplies (for example, testing media and plates) that will be required throughout the response and recovery phases of an emergency. | A |
| 3. | For laboratories that plan to provide service during an emergency: The Emergency Operations Plan describes how the laboratory will obtain and replenish nonmedical supplies (for example, batteries, soap, towels) that will be required throughout the response and recovery phases of an emergency. | A |
| 11. | The Emergency Operations Plan provides processes for managing space and equipment. | A |
| 12. | The laboratory implements the components of its Emergency Operations Plan that require advance preparation to provide for resources and assets during an emergency. (See also EM.02.02.11, EP 1)
Note: Some components of the Emergency Operations Plan are not implemented unless an emergency is imminent. Other components, however, can and should be implemented in advance so that the laboratory is as prepared as possible. | A |

Standard EM.02.02.05

As part of its Emergency Operations Plan, the laboratory prepares for how it will manage security during an emergency.

Elements of Performance for EM.02.02.05

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| 1. | The Emergency Operations Plan describes how security will be provided during an emergency. | A |
| 10. | The laboratory implements the components of its Emergency Operations Plan that require advance preparation to support internal security during an emergency.
Note: Some components of the Emergency Operations Plan are not implemented unless an emergency is imminent. Other components, however, can and should be implemented in advance so that the laboratory is as prepared as possible. | A |

Standard EM.02.02.07

As part of its Emergency Operations Plan, the laboratory prepares for how it will manage staff during an emergency.

Rationale for EM.02.02.07

In order to provide safe and effective laboratory services during an emergency, staff roles are well defined in advance. Staff roles and responsibilities may be documented in the Emergency Operations Plan through a variety of formats (for example, job action sheets, checklists, flowcharts). Due to the dynamic nature of emergencies, effective training prepares staff to adjust to changes in test volume, work procedures or conditions, and response partners within and outside the organization.

Elements of Performance for EM.02.02.07

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| 2. | The Emergency Operations Plan describes the following: The roles and responsibilities of staff during an emergency. | A |
| 3. | The Emergency Operations Plan describes the following: The process for assigning staff to all essential staff functions. | A |
| 4. | The Emergency Operations Plan identifies the individual(s) to whom staff report in emergencies. | A |
| 10. | The laboratory implements the components of its Emergency Operations Plan that require advance preparation to manage staff during an emergency.
Note: Some components of the Emergency Operations Plan are not implemented unless an emergency is imminent. Other components, however, can and should be implemented in advance so that the laboratory is as prepared as possible. | A |

Standard EM.02.02.09

As part of its Emergency Operations Plan, the laboratory prepares for how it will manage utilities during an emergency.

Rationale for EM.02.02.09

Different types of emergencies can similarly impact a laboratory's utility systems. For example, brush fires, ice storms, and industrial accidents can all result in a loss of utilities required for laboratory services and building operations. Laboratories, therefore, must have alternative means of providing for essential utilities (for example, alternative equipment for laboratory services; negotiated relationships with the primary suppliers; provision through a parent entity; a memorandum of understanding with other organizations in the community). Because some emergencies may be regional in scope or of long duration, organizations should not rely solely on a single utility provider in the community. Where possible, organizations should identify other utility providers outside of the local community in case the community's infrastructure is severely compromised and unable to support the organization.

Elements of Performance for EM.02.02.09

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| 1. | The Emergency Operations Plan describes how the laboratory will provide for alternative means of meeting essential building utility needs when the laboratory needs to provide continuous service during an emergency.
Note: Examples of utility needs include electricity, water, fuel, and medical gas/vacuum systems. | A |
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8. The laboratory implements the components of its Emergency Operations Plan that require advance preparation to provide for utilities during an emergency. **A**
 Note: Some components of the Emergency Operations Plan are not implemented unless an emergency is imminent. Other components, however, can and should be implemented in advance so that the laboratory is as prepared as possible.

Standard EM.02.02.11

As part of its Emergency Operations Plan, the laboratory prepares for how it will manage patients and laboratory services during emergencies.

Rationale for EM.02.02.11

The fundamental goals of emergency management planning are to protect life and prevent disability. The manner in which laboratory services are provided may vary by type of emergency. However, certain activities are so fundamental to patient safety (this can include decisions to modify or discontinue laboratory services, refer patients elsewhere, or transport specimens) that the laboratory should take a proactive approach in considering how they might be accomplished.

Emergencies of differing scale, scope, and complexity will impact the laboratory’s operations in different ways, as dictated by the emergency needs of patients. The emergency triage processes will typically result in patients being quickly treated and discharged, admitted for a longer stay, or transferred to a more appropriate source of care. A disaster may result in a decision to keep all patients on the premises in the interest of safety or, conversely, evacuate all patients because the facility is no longer safe. Planning for laboratory services must address these situations accordingly, particularly in the face of escalating events or in potentially austere care conditions.

Elements of Performance for EM.02.02.11

1. The Emergency Operations Plan describes how the laboratory will manage services during an emergency. (See also EM.02.02.03, EP 12) **A**
 Note: Activities related to laboratory services might include scheduling, modifying, or discontinuing services; controlling information about patients; referring specimens or testing to other facilities; and providing security. Laboratories may need to do testing for hospital inpatients and ambulatory patients, or as a public health function.
3. The Emergency Operations Plan describes how the laboratory will evacuate its staff and equipment from its occupied space (that is, relocate from one section or floor to another within the building, or completely outside the building) when deemed necessary by emergency circumstances. **A**
9. The Emergency Operations Plan establishes processes for providing backup services, if necessary. **A**
11. The laboratory implements the components of its Emergency Operations Plan that require advance preparation to manage patients during an emergency. **A**
 Note: Some components of the Emergency Operations Plan are not implemented unless an emergency is imminent. Other components, however, can and should be implemented in advance so that the laboratory is as prepared as possible.

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Standard EM.02.02.15

During disasters, the laboratory may assign disaster responsibilities to volunteer practitioners who are not licensed independent practitioners, but who are required by law and regulation to have a license, certification, or registration.

Note: While this standard allows for a method to streamline the process for verifying identification and licensure, certification, or registration, the elements of performance are intended to safeguard against inadequate care during a disaster.

Elements of Performance for EM.02.02.15

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| 1. | The laboratory assigns disaster responsibilities to volunteer practitioners who are not licensed independent practitioners only when the Emergency Operations Plan has been activated in response to a disaster and the laboratory is unable to meet immediate patient needs. | A |
| 2. | D The laboratory identifies, in writing, those individuals responsible for assigning disaster responsibilities to volunteer practitioners who are not licensed independent practitioners. | A |
| 3. | The laboratory determines how it will distinguish volunteer practitioners who are not licensed independent practitioners from its staff.
Note: This distinction could be made by using badges, vests, wristbands, or other articles. | A |
| 4. | D The laboratory describes, in writing, how it will oversee the performance of volunteer practitioners who are not licensed independent practitioners who have been assigned disaster responsibilities. Examples of methods for overseeing their performance include direct observation, mentoring, and clinical record review. | A |
| 5. | Before a volunteer practitioner who is not a licensed independent practitioner is considered eligible to function as a practitioner, the laboratory obtains his or her valid government-issued photo identification (for example, a driver's license or passport) and one of the following:
- A current picture identification card from a health care organization that clearly identifies professional designation
- A current license, certification, or registration
- Primary source verification of licensure, certification, or registration (if required by law and regulation in order to practice)
- Identification indicating that the individual is a member of a Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT), the Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), the Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals (ESAR-VHP), or other recognized state or federal response organization or group
- Identification indicating that the individual has been granted authority by a government entity to provide laboratory services in disaster circumstances
- Confirmation by laboratory staff with personal knowledge of the volunteer practitioner's ability to act as a qualified practitioner during a disaster | 3 A |
| 6. | During a disaster, the laboratory oversees the performance of each volunteer practitioner who is not a licensed independent practitioner. | A |
| 7. | Based on its oversight of each volunteer practitioner who is not a licensed independent practitioner, the laboratory determines within 72 hours after the practitioner's arrival whether assigned disaster responsibilities should continue. | C |

KEY: **A** indicates scoring category A; **C** indicates scoring category C; **2** indicates situational decision rules apply; **3** indicates direct impact requirements apply; **M** indicates Measure of Success if needed; **D** indicates that documentation is required

8. **D** Primary source verification of licensure, certification, or registration (if required by law and regulation in order to practice) of volunteer practitioners who are not licensed independent practitioners occurs as soon as the disaster is under control or within 72 hours from the time the volunteer practitioner presents him- or herself to the laboratory, whichever comes first. If primary source verification of licensure, certification, or registration (if required by law and regulation in order to practice) for a volunteer practitioner who is not a licensed independent practitioner cannot be completed within 72 hours due to extraordinary circumstances, the laboratory documents all of the following: **C**
- Reason(s) why it could not be performed within 72 hours of the practitioner's arrival
 - Evidence of the volunteer practitioner's demonstrated ability to continue to provide adequate laboratory services
 - Evidence of the laboratory's attempt to perform primary source verification as soon as possible
9. If, due to extraordinary circumstances, primary source verification of licensure of the volunteer practitioner cannot be completed within 72 hours of the practitioner's arrival, it is performed as soon as possible. **C**
 Note: Primary source verification of licensure, certification, or registration is not required if the volunteer practitioner has not provided laboratory services under his or her assigned disaster responsibilities.

Standard EM.03.01.03

The laboratory evaluates the effectiveness of its Emergency Operations Plan.

Rationale for EM.03.01.03

The laboratory conducts exercises to assess the Emergency Operations Plan's (EOP) appropriateness, adequacy, and effectiveness in the areas of communications, resources and assets, security, staff, and utilities. Exercises should test the EOP's ability to support the laboratory's preparedness and performance in a variety of possible emergencies. In other words, the design of the exercises should reflect differing degrees of emergencies while testing the organization's capability to provide laboratory services in escalating situations.

Elements of Performance for EM.03.01.03

1. As an emergency response exercise, the laboratory activates its Emergency Operations Plan twice a year at each site included in the plan; laboratories that are independent organizations (not owned by or affiliated with a health care organization, such as reference laboratories) are required to activate the plan only once each year. **A**
 Note 1: If the organization activates its Emergency Operations Plan in response to one or more actual emergencies, these emergencies can serve in place of emergency response exercises.
 Note 2: Tabletop sessions, though useful, are not acceptable substitutes for these exercises.
 Note 3: If the laboratory is part of a Joint Commission-accredited organization, the frequency of the emergency response exercise is based on the organizational plan. Because most laboratories accredited by The Joint Commission are in hospitals, they will follow the hospital requirement for two tests.
13. Representatives from administrative, support, and laboratory services participate in the evaluation of all emergency response exercises and all responses to actual emergencies. **A**
14. **D** The evaluation of all emergency response exercises and all responses to actual emergencies includes the identification of deficiencies and opportunities for improvement. This evaluation is documented. **A**

KEY: **A** indicates scoring category A; **C** indicates scoring category C; **2** indicates situational decision rules apply; **3** indicates direct impact requirements apply; **M** indicates Measure of Success if needed; **D** indicates that documentation is required

- 16. The laboratory modifies its Emergency Operations Plan based on its evaluation of emergency response exercises and responses to actual emergencies. **A**
Note: When modifications requiring substantive resources cannot be accomplished by the next emergency response exercise, interim measures are put in place until final modifications can be made.
- 17. Subsequent emergency response exercises reflect modifications and interim measures as described in the modified Emergency Operations Plan. **A**

KEY: **A** indicates scoring category A; **C** indicates scoring category C; **2** indicates situational decision rules apply; **3** indicates direct impact requirements apply; **M** indicates Measure of Success if needed; **D** indicates that documentation is required