

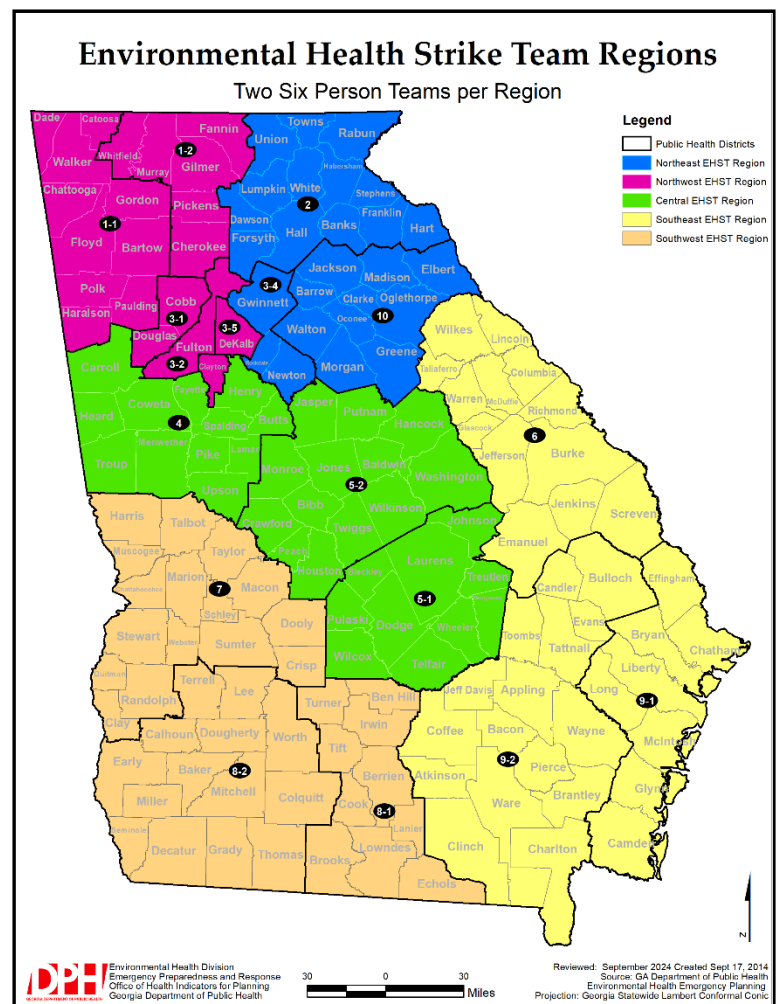


Environmental Health Strike Team Program Overview

Concept of Operation

The Environmental Health (EH) Strike Team program (referred to as "Team") is comprised of Environmental Health Specialists from the State of Georgia at the State, District, and County levels. As a component of the State of Georgia's Emergency Support Function-8 operations, the Team functions as surge support for the District Environmental Health Director's response to provide rapid EH assessment and recovery capabilities following a disaster. The EH Strike Team program is comprised of five regions within the State. Each region has enough rostered members for at least two teams of six, with most having additional members. Team members unaffected by the disaster may be deployed to support disaster recovery operations upon a request from an affected Public Health District. EH Strike Team deployments within Georgia are under the auspices of the Georgia Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Section (DPH-EH) and coordinated through the State Public Health Emergency Operations Center (DPH-EOC).

Teams operate within the ICS structure during a disaster response. District Public Health Assessment Surveillance Teams (PHAST) may be used for initial assessments, or this task may be assigned to an EH Strike Team upon arrival. After an incident, an initial assessment is critical to determine the need for additional resources from State and/or Federal agencies in response to life-threatening or imminent health hazards. The Team's support for recovery operation is crucial to restoring needed community services and public health standards to the affected area. Data collected by Teams is used by state and local EH managers and the incident command during decision-making to proactively request critical resources supporting recovery operations. One of the Team's primary missions has been to ensure the safe reopening of food service facilities as soon as possible after power returns to the affected areas.



These and other EH missions, such as well water sampling and vector surveillance, expedite social and economic community recovery while reducing the risk of a cascading disease outbreak disaster.

Demobilization begins as the community returns to a new normal and the incident needs decrease. The teams will no longer be needed to support the recovery operation and will be deactivated, turning over any pending concerns to the local EH office.

Predeployment

All Environmental Health Specialists within the state are encouraged to become members of the EH Strike Team program as part of their personal growth and professional development and to assist other colleagues throughout the state when disasters strike. The communities within the state depend on environmental health to keep them safe from imminent health hazards, especially after a disaster. Team members are offered training opportunities to enhance their professional development and credentialing. Credentialed Team members may receive a standard or advanced level. Team leaders are selected based on experience, knowledge, and leadership abilities. Credentialing requirements are located within the EH Strike Team SOG.

In addition to credentialing Team members, routine communication drills are conducted to ensure current contact information and Team deployment readiness. Regional seminars are conducted along with an annual statewide summit. The seminars provide program updates and recruitment opportunities. The annual summit provides specialized training seminars and a tabletop, functional, or full-scale exercise. If a Team disaster response deployment is imminent, an EH Strike Team availability alert is sent to all Team members to determine availability. Initial and backup Teams are finalized before a request for support is received.

Request for Deployment

A Team will most likely be requested to deploy to catastrophic scenarios where the magnitude and scope dictate the need for surge resources. A Public Health District may request an EH Strike Team via the District EH Director or by following the local resource request process. Resource requests should be documented within WebEOC. Resource requests should come through the DPH-EOC if activated and will be assigned to the EH Branch. Upon receiving the request, the EH Branch duty officer will confer with the requesting entity on the specific mission objectives, magnitude of the problem, and resource request and assess available resources. EH Strike Teams are placed on deployment alert. Requests should come directly to the DPH Environmental Health Emergency Planner, Deputy EH Director, or designee if the DPH-EOC is not activated. DPH-EH will notify the requesting agency, EPR, and the EH Strike Team Leader of the approval and coordinate details regarding the impending deployment. If the request is not granted, DPH-EH will notify the requesting agency and stand down the EH Strike Team. However, a denied request may be resubmitted in a different format or be reconsidered.

If possible, the requesting entity should arrange and pay for EH Strike Team lodging before their arrival. Coordinating alternate lodging arrangements through the State DPH Emergency Preparedness and Response (DPH-EPR) office may be incident-dependent. Other Team member travel costs related to deployment activities should be reimbursed by their sponsoring agency using standard travel reimbursement procedures. The sending jurisdiction may request travel-related cost reimbursement by sending an invoice to the affected jurisdiction. Team members must document their activities and time, preferably on the appropriate ICS form, and keep receipts for reimbursement. Team member deployment travel reimbursement costs invoiced by their home location to the affected jurisdiction provide for collating disaster response costs within the affected areas for possible FEMA disaster reimbursement.

Activation and Deployment

The Environmental Health Strike Team deployment process is designed for Team personnel and support equipment to arrive at the disaster incident command post or designated staging area within 24 hours of the deployment approval. The Teams are designed to function within the ICS span of control to provide effective communication and support while using minimal resources.

Upon activation, the Team(s) will deploy to the affected District's incident command post or staging location with the intended mission details as soon as possible. Team(s) may be pre-deployed to a staging area in anticipation of a potential disaster, such as an impending hurricane landfall. Teams are designed to support impact assessments to identify appropriate response needs, pursue immediate recovery steps, and provide disaster intelligence to the District EH Director and DPH-EOC EH Branch concerning situations and imminent health hazards.

Mission

Initial impact area assessments are needed to determine the size and scope of the incident and identify the resources needed for an effective EH Strike Team response. The time to conduct the assessments is incident-specific and dynamic with cascading events. Each Team leader reports to an assigned person within the incident command structure, usually the County EH manager. Teams are equipped with standard-issue EH supplies but utilize local equipment and supplies as needed while following proper SOGs and reporting procedures. Teams are assigned to support EH recovery operation activities based on the needs assessment and mission objectives, including but not limited to well water sampling, onsite septic assessments, vector surveillance and control, emergency shelter, mass feeding site, and portable toilet inspections. All incidents are unique; thus, the time frame for team deployment may vary based on the needs of the resource support request. Team members are asked to plan for a 7-day deployment, which may be augmented by replacement Teams if needed.

Deactivation

As the response recovery needs to lessen, Teams may no longer be needed to support the local environmental health operation. The incident command will authorize the demobilization of the

Teams. Upon deactivation, the Team mission terminates and returns operations and pending concerns to the local EH office before returning to their home base. Demobilization is complete once all team members have safely returned to their home base of operation and have notified their team lead, who notifies the EH emergency planner or designee. Hot wash details should be included in an after-action report that is completed promptly as part of the improvement planning process.