

Georgia Department of Public Health

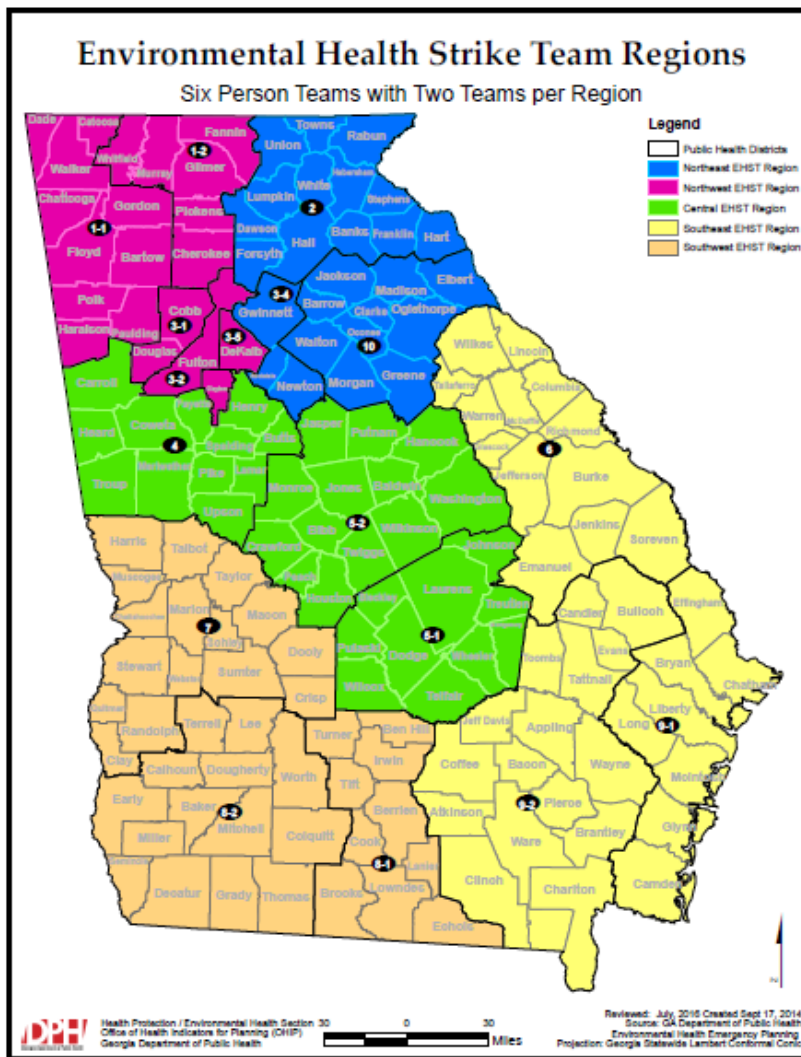
Environmental Health

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, Department of Public Health, Environmental Health programs from the State, District, and County level. As a component of the State of Georgia ESF-8 operations, the Team(s) 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 a primary and backup Team, with a roster of backup Team members. Teams in regions unaffected by the disaster may be deployed to assist affected regions upon request from that Public Health District. EH Strike Team deployments within Georgia are under the auspices of the Georgia Department of Public Health, Environmental Health Section (GDPH-EH) and coordinated through the State Public Health Emergency Operations Center.

Teams operate within the ICS structure during a disaster response and may utilize the District Public Health Assessment Surveillance Teams (PHAST) initial assessments or may be assigned the mission of conducting an assessment of impacted areas. The Team’s initial assessment is critical within the first few days after an incident as part of the comprehensive survey to determine if the need for additional resource support 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 restore 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 commander during the decision making process to pro-actively request critical resources to support local recovery efforts.



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

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Predeployment

All Environmental Health Specialists within the state are encouraged to become a member of the EH Strike Team program as part of their personal growth and professional development as well as 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. EH Strike Team members are offered training opportunities to enhance their professional development while becoming a credentialed EH Strike Team member. 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, quarterly call down drills are conducted to ensure communication and contact information is current and to determine response times. Regional seminars are conducted annually along with a statewide summit. The seminars and summit include EH Strike Team updates, specialized trainings and/or table top, functional or a full scale exercises.

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. An EH Strike Team may be requested by a Public Health District, via the District EH Director or by following the local resource request process and should be documented in WebEOC. The resource request should come through the State PH EOC if activated and will be assigned to the EH duty officer. Upon receiving the request, the EH duty officer will confer with the requesting entity on the specific mission objectives, magnitude of the problem, resource request and assess available resources. An appropriate regional EH Strike Team Leader will be placed on alert at this time. If the PH EOC is not activated, requests should come directly to the GDPH Environmental Health Deputy Director or assignee. GDPH-EH will notify the requesting agency, EPR and the Regional EH Strike Team Leader of the approval and coordinate details regarding the impending deployment. If the request is not granted, GDPH-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 at a later time.

The requesting entity should make arrangements for lodging of EH Strike Team Members. All reimbursable costs incurred during travel related to Team activations that are paid by individual Team members will be reimbursed by their sponsoring agencies using standard travel reimbursement procedures. All team members shall document their time on appropriate ICS forms and time-sheets and keep any receipts for submission to FEMA for potential reimbursement.

Upon activation and deployment of a Team, GDPH-EH will issue a Mission Assignment to each participating District EH office sending EH staff. Once mission-assigned, the participating District assumes all responsibilities for the cost of activating its Team member. Should the disaster receive a federal declaration, State EH will send the participating District an official letter that will direct the agency to submit for reimbursement of all Team activation-related costs.

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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 activation. The Teams are designed to function within the ICS span of control in order to provide effective communication and support while using minimal resources.

Upon activation, the Team(s) will deploy as soon as possible to the affected District EH Director with a specific mission task. Team(s) may be pre-deployed to a staging area upon approval of the resource request from a District EH Director or at the direction of the State EH Director or State EH Deputy Director in anticipation of a potential disaster such as a hurricane. Teams are designed to assess the overall impact of an event and determine appropriate response requirements, pursue immediate recovery steps, and provide disaster intelligence to the District EH Director and State PH-EOC-EH lead concerning situations and imminent health hazards.

Mission

Due to the unique mission of the EH Strike Teams, initial assessment assignments are conducted to determine the size and scope of the incident and resource needs necessary for an effective EH Strike Teams response. The time to conduct the assessments are incident specific and dynamic with cascading events. Each Team has a Team leader that reports to an assigned person within the incident command structure, utilizing equipment and supplies as needed, following proper SOG's and reporting procedures. Teams are assigned to support EH recovery operation activities based on the needs assessment and mission objectives which could include but are not limited to well water sampling, onsite septic assessments, vector control evaluations, shelter, mass feeding site and portable toilet inspections. All incidents are unique, thus the time frame for Team deployment may vary based on the resource support request needs. Team members are asked to plan for 7-14 days and may be augmented by other regional EH Strike Teams.

Deactivation

As the disaster incident response recovery needs lessen, Teams may no longer be needed to support the local environmental health operation. The incident command will authorize demobilization of the Teams. Upon deactivation, the Team mission terminates and returns operations and pending concerns to the local agency before returning to their home base.