

Security and access arrangements are necessary for primary and alternate facilities during emergency and non-emergency situations. Security procedures should be sufficient to accommodate all hazards and should include provisions to establish access restrictions.

Use Worksheet #33 to list the agency's alternate facilities.

Be sure to include a map with clear driving directions, as well as special requirements regarding physical access to the alternate facility.

E. Determining the Existence of Interoperable Communications

Interoperable communications are communications that provide the capability to perform essential functions, in conjunction with other agencies and organizations, until normal operations can resume. Interoperable communications means that response personnel must be able to communicate:

- Externally with the agency's customers and business partners.
- Internally with the agency's leadership and coworkers.
- Even if the primary means of communications fails.

The communications component of a COOP plan requires well-defined chains of communication with alternative means of communicating should primary communications systems (telephones, faxes, and internet) not be functioning.

Organizations should strive always to maintain communications capabilities sufficient to support essential functions. The COOP plan should facilitate communication between the POC/COOP team, management and staff and should provide for communication with other organizations, as well as emergency personnel. The plan should also provide a means for notifying customers of organization relocation and procedures for contacting the organization and conducting business in an emergency.

The first step in communications planning is to assess the communications systems supporting each essential function. The second step is to identify controls that could prevent interruption of primary communication channels and alternative modes of communication in case the primary modes of communication are not available. The third step is to create a chain of communication for emergency situations.