



## **MDH Incident Management Policy**

**PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
OFFICE OF PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE**

**MDH POLICY #: 03.01.01  
Effective Date: 2/11/2026**

### **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) has the mission to promote and improve the health and safety of all Marylanders through disease prevention, access to care, quality management, and community engagement.

This policy describes how MDH shall respond to emergency situations that are beyond the capacity of individual MDH/local health departments to handle, details the responsibilities of key staff, and provides a framework for small to large scale incident management.

The MDH Public Health Services Administration is responsible for administering this program through the MDH Office of Preparedness and Response (OP&R).

### **II. BACKGROUND**

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) is a system established by the federal government for a nationwide approach to incident management. The State of Maryland adopted NIMS in 2004 with full implementation in 2005. In accordance with this directive, each state department or agency is to adopt and implement NIMS, specifically the Incident Command System (ICS). ICS is a management system designed to enable effective and efficient domestic incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure. It enables incident managers to identify the key concerns associated with the incident—often under urgent conditions—without sacrificing attention to any component of the command system.

ICS is flexible and scalable depending on the size, duration, and complexity of the incident. An Incident Commander leads and manages an incident response, serving as the final point of accountability and decision-making for the overall response. Typically, the following sections are established and report to the Incident Commander: Planning, Operations, Logistics, and Finance/Administration; these sections may expand to include any sub-units necessary to complete the activities required to respond to the incident.

This version of MDH Policy 03.01.01 effective February 11, 2026 updates the MDH Incident Support and Training section to align with the Maryland Department of Emergency Management as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) program, updates the Roles and Responsibilities section, and makes various updates to terminology. Additionally, this policy is recodified from prior MDH Policy 02.11.01 to MDH Policy 03.01.01.

### **III. POLICY STATEMENTS**

#### **A. DEFINITIONS**

In this policy, the following terms have the meanings indicated.

1. **“Incident Command System (ICS)”** means a standardized approach to the command, control, and coordination of an incident, providing a common hierarchy within which personnel from multiple organizations can operate effectively. ICS is the combination of procedures, personnel, facilities, equipment, and communications operating within a common organizational structure, designed to aid in the management of resources during incidents. It is used for all kinds of incidents and is applicable to small, as well as large and complex, incidents, including planned events.
  - a. ICS is adaptable, applicable, and acceptable to all state agencies. The system expands in a rapid and logical manner ranging from an initial response to the management of a major incident, and contracts just as rapidly as the organizational needs of the situation decrease.
  - b. ICS utilizes common terminology, procedures and standards to enhance the effectiveness of multiple agencies and organizations working collaboratively.
2. **“Emergency Operations Center (EOC)”** means the physical location at which the coordination of information and resources to support incident management activities normally takes place.
3. **“Incident Action Plan (IAP)”** means an oral or written plan containing the objectives established by the Incident Commander and addressing activities for the planned operation period.

#### **B. GENERAL POLICY STATEMENTS**

The purpose of this policy is to establish the management structure, responsibilities, and procedures necessary for MDH to respond to a significant incident.

This policy takes into account the following assumptions:

- An emergency incident may occur at any time, day or night, weekend or holiday, with little or no warning.
- The exact unfolding of an incident is not entirely predictable. Operational plans and procedures should be flexible and serve as guides and may require in-the-moment modification to meet the demands of an incident.
- Incidents that do not affect MDH directly but that affect Public Health and Medical operations in Maryland may still require the involvement of MDH.
- Establishing and maintaining communication among MDH administrations as well as with external partners is one of the highest priorities in any incident.
- Even though a policy such as this can never address every possible incident, it defines a process for responding to most incidents.

### **1. Applicability/Triggers**

MDH units regularly respond to routine incidents as part of their normal operations by using pre-established plans and procedures, both written and practiced. However, when incidents increase in magnitude or complexity and surpass the scope of those plans and procedures, additional resources and coordination may be required to support emergency response and recovery efforts. This policy is triggered when plans and procedures developed by MDH units are insufficient to handle an incident, and enterprise-wide incident coordination for response, continuity, and recovery operations is determined to be necessary.

### **2. Activation and Response Framework**

Activation may be triggered through internal incidents or partnership with the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) for statewide incidents/events.

#### **a. Notification of MDH Secretary and Senior Policy Group:**

Notification should include:

- i. Situation briefing and actions taken to present; and
- ii. Consideration of existing capability/capacity to respond.

#### **b. Determination of next steps with subject matter experts and MDH Secretary:**

Determination of next steps should consider:

- i. What is the action plan?
- ii. Is activation of additional MDH resources needed?

- iii. What level of activation as determined by the Secretary with consultation with MDEM as indicated:
  - 1. **Normal** - routine operations
  - 2. **Enhanced** - incident requires additional monitoring/resources
  - 3. **Partial** - incident requires significant monitoring/resources
  - 4. **Full** - requires full MDH response/resources
- iv. Amount of ICS staffing needed? (note: MDH Secretary will serve as/designate the Incident Commander)
- v. What is the measure of success?
- vi. What other resources (e.g., equipment, funding, personnel) are required?
- vii. Determine the collaboration required with other State agencies, Federal agencies, local governmental entities, or other entities.

**c. Mobilization of Response Operations**

Mobilization of response operations should involve:

- i. Managing and sustaining response operations; and
- ii. Regular and situational updates for leadership.

**d. Demobilization and Evaluation**

Demobilization and evaluation activities should include:

- i. Returning MDH resources to their day-to-day operations (e.g. staffing, space, assets); and
- ii. Evaluating lessons learned and incorporating them into MDH plans and procedures.

**3. ICS Structure and Responsibilities\***

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Incident Commander         | <p>Has the overall responsibility and authority for incident response. These responsibilities include (but are not limited to):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appointment of the Command and General Staff below as necessary.</li> <li>2. Establishing and/or activating ICS .</li> <li>3. Briefing staff on the situation and mobilizing additional agency personnel if necessary.</li> <li>4. Authorizing action and tactical plans.</li> <li>5. Maintaining the safety of all affected personnel.</li> </ol> |
| Liaison Officer            | Point of contact for other involved departments, agencies, and external partners - may request additional MDH staff to assist through the Incident Commander as the incident requires.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Public Information Officer | Responsible for interfacing with traditional/social media outlets and the public to share event information - may request additional MDH staff to assist through the Incident Commander as the incident requires.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Safety Officer             | Monitors incident operations and advises the Incident Commander on all matters relating to operational safety, including the health and safety of emergency responders - may request additional MDH staff to assist through the Incident Commander as the incident requires.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Operations Section Chief   | Responsible for the direct management of all incident-related operational activities and personnel - may request additional MDH staff to assist through the Incident Commander as the incident requires.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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| Planning Section Chief                      | Responsible for collecting, evaluating, and disseminating operational information related to the incident and for the preparation and documentation of the Incident Action Plans (IAP) and Situation Report - may request additional MDH staff to assist through the Incident Commander as the incident requires. |
| Logistics Section Chief                     | Responsible for providing internal and external logistical support based on incident demands and needs including the identification of existing and potential outside resources - may request additional MDH staff to assist through the Incident Commander as the incident requires.                             |
| Finance/<br>Administration<br>Section Chief | Responsible for establishing, documenting, and managing costs and administrative support services associated with the event - may request additional MDH staff to assist through the Incident Commander as the incident requires.                                                                                 |

\*The ICS structure is flexible and scalable; positions may be added or omitted based on the status of the incident and the needs of the Department.

#### **4. MDH Incident Support and Training**

Any MDH employee may be asked to respond to an incident, fulfilling an above role or a role within those sections. The MDH Office of Preparedness and Response (OP&R) and the MDH Office of Human Resources will coordinate to provide training for staff to ensure all MDH employees are familiar with ICS. These offices will coordinate with other MDH units as well as partner agencies when necessary.

Within one year for current employees and six months of hire date for new employees from the effective date of this policy (subject to availability of course offering), MDH and Local Health Department (LHD) staff will complete the trainings below as defined by their position:

- a. MDH and LHD staff in public health emergency preparedness positions:
  - i. Independent Study IS-100: Introduction to ICS;
  - ii. IS-700: An Introduction to the National Incident Management System (NIMS);  
and
  - iii. IS-800: National Response Framework, An Introduction.

- b. Health Department positions supervising MDH and/or LHD public health emergency preparedness positions:
  - i. IS-100, IS-700, IS-800; and
  - ii. IS-200: Basic ICS for Initial Response.
- c. MDH and LHD Health Department positions likely to serve in an Emergency Operations Center (e.g. State Emergency Operations Center agency representative, Local Emergency Operations Center agency representative):
  - i. IS-100, IS-200, IS-700, IS-800;
  - ii. IS-2200: Basic Emergency Operations Center Functions; and
  - iii. G-191 Incident Command System/Emergency Operations Center Interface or State / Local Emergency Management designated equivalent course.
- d. MDH and LHD Health Department positions likely to serve in Designated Response Roles (e.g. Incident Commander, Planning Section Chief):
  - i. IS-100, IS-200, IS-700, IS-800, IS-2200, G-191;
  - ii. ICS 300: Intermediate ICS for Expanding Incidents;
  - iii. Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) Just-in-Time Training for Deploying Personnel; and
  - iv. Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC).
- e. MDH and LHD Health Department positions that are likely to support the management of large/complex responses (i.e. incidents across multiple locations or over a large area):
  - i. IS-100, IS-200, ICS 300, IS-700, IS-800, IS-2200, G-191, CERC; and
  - ii. ICS 400: Advanced ICS.
- f. All other MDH/LHD positions not listed in items i-v above may opt for IS-100 and IS-700 or a Workday Learning training outlining the basics of NIMS/ICS which will be updated by OP&R in coordination with the Office of Human Resources. This Workday Learning training will be paired with just-in-time ICS training as needed.

OP&R will coordinate with MDH units to prepare staff to respond to incidents. MDH Units shall provide staff and expertise for incident response support and promote a culture of readiness to support MDH response. Incident response takes precedence over non-response work activities and may interrupt normal day-to-day work commitments. Employees should keep in regular communication with their day-to-day supervisor to ensure work can be temporarily paused or reassigned during a response.

LHDs may build their own Incident Management Teams and/or enact local policies that require additional incident response training per the needs of their jurisdiction.

## **5. MDH Incident Reporting**

A reporting structure shall be established for all MDH Units to have access to report incidents using the [Maryland Department of Health \(MDH\) Incident Report Form](#).

Incidents that shall be reported under this system include incidents that render significant disruptions to operations, the safety of patients, employees, or the public, or generate media or legislative interest. Submissions through the system are for internal use only and are used to expedite communication regarding incidents. The form used for incident reporting shall include instructions for the reporter to assess the level of severity of the incident and other relevant details. All MDH units shall use the MDH Incident Reporting structure.

## **6. MDH Incident Response Plans**

All plans used for MDH incident response shall be shared with OP&R. OP&R shall be responsible for maintaining a copy of these plans, reviewing them, and ensuring they feed into overall MDH-wide incident planning (i.e. plans should not contradict each other). OP&R may coordinate with MDH units to create or update planning to ensure planning gaps are filled.

## **7. MDH Incident Management Teams**

OP&R shall coordinate the development and sustainment of Incident Management Teams (IMTs). These teams shall be made up of staff located throughout MDH's various units. The teams will serve as the initial response teams for an incident. IMTs will receive additional emergency management training coordinated through OP&R and will meet regularly to train and exercise together to ensure readiness to respond. IMT members may coordinate with their "home units" to regularly brief them on upcoming events and potential hazards requiring response (e.g. special events, severe weather) to assist readiness within these units.

OP&R will create and maintain standing IMT duty charts and assignments for initial activation of this team. OP&R will coordinate with MDH Senior Leadership to designate secondary duty ICS assignment responsibilities to key personnel and facilitate additional training for these individuals.

## **8. MDH Emergency Notification System**

MDH shall maintain an Emergency Notification System, which will facilitate dissemination of information to MDH employees (either as a whole or within certain locations) alerting them to a pending or existing emergency. The list of employees shall be maintained by the Office of Human Resources; alerts may be issued by any

administrator of the system. This system will be drilled on a regular basis to ensure familiarity with the system by MDH employees.

#### **IV. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

| <b>MDH UNIT</b>                                       | <b>ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>MDH Public Health Services Administration</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Oversee MDH Incident Management planning and implementation</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>MDH Operations Administration</b>                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Oversee the MDH Incident Reporting system and makes MDH notifications as appropriate</li> <li>● Implement the MDH Emergency Notification System</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>MDH Secretary and Senior Policy Group</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Determine necessary actions and resources to be utilized as part of a MDH response (as found in the Activation and Response Framework)</li> <li>● Designate appropriate MDH staff to implement response activities and reporting</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Office of Preparedness and Response (OP&amp;R)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Coordinate incident management support across MDH, which may include establishing and maintaining an EOC</li> <li>● Serve as agency representative in the State EOC when activated</li> <li>● Coordinate with the Office of Human Resources to provide ICS training</li> <li>● Create and sustain IMTs, to include standing ICS duty charts and assignments for initial activation</li> <li>● Maintain MDH incident response plans and coordinate with subject matter experts to update as needed</li> <li>● Coordinate trainings and exercises</li> <li>● Coordinate the after-action process for incidents, events, and exercises as appropriate</li> </ul> |
| <b>Office of Human Resources</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Coordinate with OP&amp;R to provide ICS training</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

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|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>All other MDH Units</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Report incidents through the MDH Incident Report Form as appropriate</li> <li>● Coordinate with staff to promote a culture of readiness to support incident response</li> <li>● Maintain day-to-day plans and procedures to respond to routine incidents</li> <li>● Share incident response planning with the OP&amp;R</li> <li>● Ensure staff participate and complete required trainings</li> <li>● Respond to requests for information/processes from your respective unit in a timely manner</li> <li>● Participate in trainings and exercises as invited</li> <li>● Participate in any after-action process as invited</li> </ul> |
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## **V. REFERENCES**

- FEMA Incident Command System  
<https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/nims/components>
- Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Incident Report Form  
[https://memama.maryland.gov/Documents/NIMS\\_Plan%20FINAL.pdf](https://memama.maryland.gov/Documents/NIMS_Plan%20FINAL.pdf)

## **VII. CHANGE HISTORY**

| DATE              | VERSION | CREATED BY                              | DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------|---------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| February 11, 2026 | V2      | MDH Office of Preparedness and Response | Ownership of policy moved from Operations to Public Health Services. Incident Support and Training section updated to align with CDC PHEP and MDEM. Updates to Roles and Responsibilities. Updated terminology. Policy recodified from 02.11.01 to 03.01.01. |
| December 1, 2021  | V1      | MDH Operations Administration           | Document creation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

## **APPROVED:**

  
**Meena Seshamani, M.D., Ph.D**  
**Secretary of Health**

**February 11, 2026**  
**Effective Date**

MDH Policy 03.01.01 is effective February 11, 2026. This version supersedes and recodifies the prior version MDH Policy 02.11.01 effective December 1, 2021.