

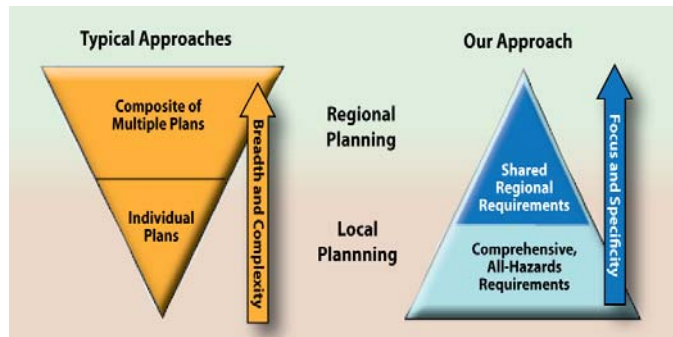
REGIONAL CATASTROPHIC PLANNING: A NEW APPROACH

Traditional emergency planning in the United States is a tiered, hierarchical process. Individual jurisdictions work diligently to produce comprehensive, all-hazard operations plans, complete with a full complement of hazard- and resource-specific annexes. Yet disasters don't recognize jurisdictional boundaries, and all too frequently, as events expand and involve or overwhelm multiple jurisdictions, individual plans come into conflict. The problem lies not with our technical planning proficiency, but rather with how that proficiency is brought to bear to address specific operational requirements that transcend jurisdictional boundaries.

Overcoming challenges to regional catastrophic planning will not be achieved by simply applying typical emergency planning approaches within a larger regional footprint. The challenge of regional catastrophic planning is fundamentally one of scale. What is needed is a simple, elegant concept of operations detailing how the capabilities of various regional stakeholders will be brought together and employed *jointly* to address very specific, region-wide operational requirements triggered by potentially catastrophic events.

We propose to plan selectively, focusing on very specific, prioritized operational needs that transcend jurisdictional boundaries throughout the region. As the accompanying image illustrates, regional planning offers an opportunity for increasingly focused and specific activities, building on the broader, all-hazard foundation of local emergency operations planning while helping to focus regional partners on issues that are truly regional.

Scaling Planning to Meet Requirements



Our Approach to Regional Catastrophic Planning

Identifying and Scaling Regional Planning Requirements

Regional catastrophic planning should first focus on identifying a specific set of operational requirements that transcend jurisdictional boundaries within the region. These regional operational requirements can best be identified by: (1) learning lessons from real-world events and exercises that test existing plans and help identify potential stress points and (2) identifying shared regional risks. Reconstructing a recent large-scale disaster affords the region a relevant opportunity to analyze how preexisting plans were implemented regionally. Regional risk analysis enables the region to truly understand the unique implications of the broader range of risks it faces collectively, and surface the subset of most critical risks that affect most, if not all, of the region as a whole. The findings from these analyses can then be translated into focused regional operational planning requirements, around which joint planning actions can be structured.

Structuring Planning Activities and Developing Plans

Prioritizing regional operational planning requirements facilitates targeted reviews of existing plans and identification of key regional stakeholders. Under our approach, regional planning activities generate concise concepts of operations (CONOPS) for joint activities across the region to address specific, shared operational requirements. These CONOPS outline: (1) what capabilities will be employed to address the stated requirements, (2) who will participate, and (3) where, when, and how objectives will be accomplished. CONOPS may be supported by additional materials such as functional or incident-specific annexes, as appropriate.

Linking Operational and Capabilities-Based Planning for Resource Allocation

Risk and capability are dynamic forces that evolve over time as environments change and adversaries adapt. Equally dynamic processes must therefore be incorporated into regional catastrophic planning to maintain a current understanding of risk and capabilities, quantify gaps in preparedness capabilities, and then invest accordingly. Our approach includes both an assessment of key preparedness capabilities across the region and an alignment of results with regional risks to identify gaps between regional requirements and capabilities. This enables justifiable and systematic allocation of limited resources to high-payoff investments that address critical capability gaps in individual jurisdictions with region-wide implications.

Validating Plans

Validation activities allow jurisdictions to see the plans they have developed in action, exposing both strengths and shortcomings in operational settings. Ongoing validation activities, including exercises and event reconstruction, allow planning activities to function as a living process that evolves over time. Our approach to regional catastrophic planning includes a focus on designing validation methodologies that leverage existing evaluation approaches and incorporating these methodologies into regional exercises and emergency operations.

Yielding Results That Matter

Our approach emphasizes the systematic forging and maintenance of organizational relationships to support development of joint regional plans that tackle the most compelling regional operational requirements. Through these efforts, a coordinated regional approach can be implemented to:

- Build on existing regional investments in risk analysis, capabilities-based planning, and regional collaboration
- Identify, analyze, and prioritize regional risks and capability gaps
- Derive prioritized, regional planning requirements from the regional risk profile
- Establish requirement-specific planning processes
- Leverage existing exercise programs and real-world events to validate regional plans
- Support continuous regional planning processes and planning communities.

Moving Forward

CNA, a non-profit research and analysis organization, is a national leader in supporting homeland security preparedness, prevention and response activities at the federal, state and local levels. Together with our corporate partners, we offer an overall risk management approach to helping clients develop and maintain homeland security capabilities. For further information, contact CNA Safety and Security at (703) 824-0007, or visit us at www.cna.org.