

# UKRANIAN RED CROSS



## Emergency Operations Centre

### Case Study

### Summary

<b>National Society</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ukrainian Red Cross</li></ul>
<b>EOC Level(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A National level EOC operates at headquarters, with regional level coordination arrangements activated as needed across regions.</li></ul>
<b>Year Established</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Launched 2021 (prep work 2018-2021)</li></ul>
<b>Administrative Coverage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The EOC provides nationwide coverage, supporting coordination across all regions and branches of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society.</li></ul>
<b>EOC Type</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The EOC set-up is based on a fixed, facility-based model implemented at three levels. A national EOC operates at URCS Regional Organisation level, four inter-regional EOCs cover 20 regions, and a central EOC is maintained at National Committee level for strategic coordination and information consolidation. This structure enables consistent coordination and scalable support across all levels.</li></ul>
<b>EOC Modality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hybrid modality where a permanent institutional existence with urge operational activation capacity during emergencies.</li></ul>
<b>Supporting NSs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ICRC, IFRC and all partners that are involved in response in implementing activities and projects in Ukraine.</li></ul>
<b>EOC Specific Staff / Volunteers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EOC is staffed through designated senior National Committee personnel. Arund 15 staff members from other departments are formally appointed to the EOC once activated.</li></ul>
<b>Governance Line</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The EOC reports to the President of the URCS and Director General of the National Committee It has an advisory and</li></ul>

	<p>coordination role, preparing analysis and recommendations, while formal decisions are issued by senior leadership through official orders.</p>
<p><b>Connection with Authorities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• URCS operates in line with its auxiliary role through formal Memoranda of Understanding with regional administrations and civil protection authorities. The EOC interfaces with existing government coordination and civil protection systems to ensure information sharing, operational alignment, and role clarity, deliberately avoiding duplication and parallel coordination structures.</li> </ul>

## 1. Context and Characteristics

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was established by the Ukrainian Red Cross Society (URCS) as a permanent operational headquarters to strengthen institutional preparedness, coordination, and decision support during emergencies. Its establishment responded to the need for a structured internal coordination mechanism capable of supporting leadership decision-making and ensuring operational continuity across a wide range of crises, while remaining fully aligned with national legislation and the auxiliary role of URCS.

The EOC is designed to address multiple hazards, including armed conflict, floods, epidemics, technological accidents, and other large-scale shocks. It functions as a standing structure with scalable activation, transitioning from preparedness and monitoring to partial or full operational coordination depending on the severity, scope, and evolution of each emergency.

The EOC is event-driven rather than providing routine support to regional structures. Activation is based on situational analysis and leadership decisions, ensuring proportional and needs-based engagement. Its operations are explicitly aligned with Ukraine’s national emergency management framework, which defines response levels at the local, regional, state, and national levels. Within this framework, the EOC adapts its coordination role accordingly, ensuring integration with government-led mechanisms and avoiding the creation of parallel coordination structures.

## 2. Core Functional Areas

### a. Strategic

Strategic decisions are taken at headquarters level by the senior leadership of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society (URCS), based on information and requests escalated from regional structures through established reporting lines. Final decision-making authority rests with the President and the Director General, supported by the Operational Headquarters, which serves as the central coordination and advisory body.

Strategic coordination and decision-making meetings are convened on an as-needed basis during emergencies, with frequency determined by the scale, complexity, and evolution of the situation. During large-scale or rapidly evolving crises, meetings may occur frequently to ensure timely direction and oversight.

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) plays a key role in supporting leadership decision-making by consolidating, validating, and analysing information received from regional branches and response teams. The EOC produces standardised assessment and reporting products at 24, 48, and 72 hours following the onset of an emergency, in line with established assessment and reporting SOPs, providing leadership with structured, evidence-based inputs.

The Operational Headquarters brings together approximately sixteen senior representatives from key technical and support functions—including disaster response, logistics, security, legal, communications, IT, finance, and administration—to ensure cross-functional situational awareness and coordinated strategic advice. While structured assessment and reporting processes are in place, the further development of EOC-specific SOPs and internal coordination procedures has been identified as an area for continued strengthening.

### b. Operations

Operational coordination at the regional level is led by the Head of the Regional Office, who maintains a direct coordination and reporting link with the headquarters Operational Headquarters. While an inter-regional EOC system is under development, operational coordination currently takes place primarily between regional structures and the national level.

#### Activation

When an emergency occurs, Regional Offices may activate their coordination arrangements to consolidate information, assess operational capacity, and coordinate inputs from branches, volunteers, and relevant local authorities. Activation is escalated to the

headquarters EOC based on the scale of the event and the need for additional coordination, technical guidance, or resources. Deactivation takes place once coordination demands decrease and activities transition back to routine management structures.

Information is collected from local branches, volunteers, district administrations, and regional authorities, and consolidated at the regional level. Where additional support is required, the Regional Office formally engages the headquarters EOC, which provides strategic guidance, technical direction, and operational support, including the mobilisation of staff, equipment, or surge capacity from neighbouring regions or the national level.

## **Preparedness**

In preparedness mode, coordination meetings are held on a regular basis to review ongoing operations, identify preparedness gaps, and highlight capacity constraints across key sectors, including health and WASH. In regions experiencing recurrent or protracted emergencies, coordination may occur more frequently to ensure timely information flow and effective escalation to the national level when required.

### **c. Information Management**

Information management within the EOC relies on a combination of standardised and context-adapted tools used across regional and national levels. Multiple Kobo forms are deployed for rapid assessments, incident reporting, and operational updates, with regional teams adapting tools and workflows based on local capacity, access constraints, and operational conditions. Field data is typically consolidated, cleaned, and verified using Excel before being shared with headquarters.

Routine operational coordination and rapid information exchange are facilitated through WhatsApp and email, particularly during the initial stages of emergencies. These channels support the timely escalation of alerts, clarification of information, and coordination between regional offices and headquarters. Formal information products are compiled centrally to support leadership decision-making.

Data collected through these tools feeds into situation reports, assessment summaries, and ad hoc analytical briefs, which inform prioritisation, resource allocation, and escalation decisions. While the use of dashboards and advanced analytical products is not yet fully institutionalised and varies by region, available data is consistently used to support SitReps, operational updates, and targeted support requests during emergencies. Further harmonisation of tools, dashboards, and analytical products has been identified as a priority area for continued development

### 3. Infrastructure and Equipment

The EOC operates from a dedicated physical space at headquarters, originally designed as a standard meeting room and subsequently adapted into a permanent coordination facility. The space is equipped with basic office infrastructure, internet connectivity, and communications equipment, supporting both day-to-day coordination and emergency operations. Equipment is used routinely for operational planning, coordination meetings, and information exchange, and can be scaled or reconfigured upon EOC activation.

The EOC relies on standard communication systems to facilitate coordination and information sharing, ensuring reliable connectivity with regional offices and field teams. Activation is event-driven and occurs on a case-by-case basis, with emergency response teams operating under a 24/7 duty system and deploying directly to affected areas as required.

While remote coordination and field-based operations are applied in practice, backup EOC locations and fully defined remote operating modalities have not yet been formalised within dedicated EOC procedures. This remains an identified area for further institutional development.

### 4. Integration with Government and Partners

The EOC interfaces with government authorities, humanitarian partners, and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement through established coordination mechanisms that reflect the auxiliary role of the Ukrainian Red Cross Society (URCS). Engagement with state actors is anchored in existing national civil protection arrangements, including coordination with civil protection structures and relevant national institutions, with the Cabinet of Ministers serving as the central civil protection authority.

At the national level, the President and Director General participate in the Emergency Board alongside Heads of Regions, providing a formal platform for strategic coordination between URCS leadership and state authorities. This mechanism ensures alignment of priorities, structured information exchange, and coherence between URCS operations and government-led response mechanisms.

At the regional level, coordination with local authorities and national institutions is tailored to the specific risk profile and operational context of each region, with more intensive engagement in areas facing higher or recurrent risks. Through these arrangements, the EOC facilitates information sharing, operational alignment, and complementary action with government entities, Movement partners, and humanitarian actors, while avoiding duplication and reinforcing existing coordination structures

## 5. Lessons Learned and Adaptation

### Achievement

A key achievement has been the progressive establishment of a functional EOC approach grounded in realistic institutional capacities, rather than idealised or infrastructure-driven models. Experience has demonstrated that effective EOC functioning cannot rely solely on senior leadership engagement or ad hoc mobilisation. Instead, it requires dedicated focal points, clearly defined roles, and simple, workable coordination processes that can be sustained over time and across different operational contexts.

### Good Practices

One notable good practice has been the early and continuous involvement of internal departments and partners in shaping the EOC approach, fostering shared ownership and improved cross-functional alignment. Over time, the EOC has evolved from being perceived primarily as an emergency-specific mechanism to serving as a broader coordination space that supports timely problem-solving and informed decision-making across a range of operational scenarios. Its structure has increasingly reflected the three-level organisational setup, strengthening coherence between local, regional, and national coordination arrangements.

### Adaptations

Several adaptations were introduced in response to operational realities, particularly the gap between formally designed systems and the pressures of real emergencies. While procedures may function effectively during non-crisis periods, strict adherence to formal processes has not always aligned with field needs during active responses. Ongoing challenges include limited dedicated staffing, sustainability of the setup, and uneven coordination capacity across regions. To address these constraints, the EOC approach has prioritised flexibility, simplified procedures, and context-driven coordination, recognising that an effective EOC must remain practical, scalable, and fit for purpose under pressure, rather than structurally perfect.