

EIIP Virtual Forum

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Evaluation of Emergency Management System Developed for Georgia Division of Public Health

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*ICF Consulting Group's
Emergency Management Practice*

Case Study: Georgia DPH

- Tropical Storm Alberto (1994) overwhelmed Georgia public health professionals
- Health of tens of thousands of Georgians were affected by the storm and subsequent flooding
- Hired consulting team to develop incident management system



State Public Health Disaster Issues

Maintain protective public health operations under abnormal and stressful circumstances

- Damaged infrastructure, communications
- Water and wastewater contamination
- Injuries, disease
- Distribution problems with pharmaceuticals
- Evacuation/sheltering

Planning Process

- Research Phase: Analyzed existing conditions
- Procedures Development: Emergency SOPs at 3 levels – state, district, & county
- Implementation: Exercises, statewide trainings
- Post-implementation evaluation of new system

Results: Research Phase

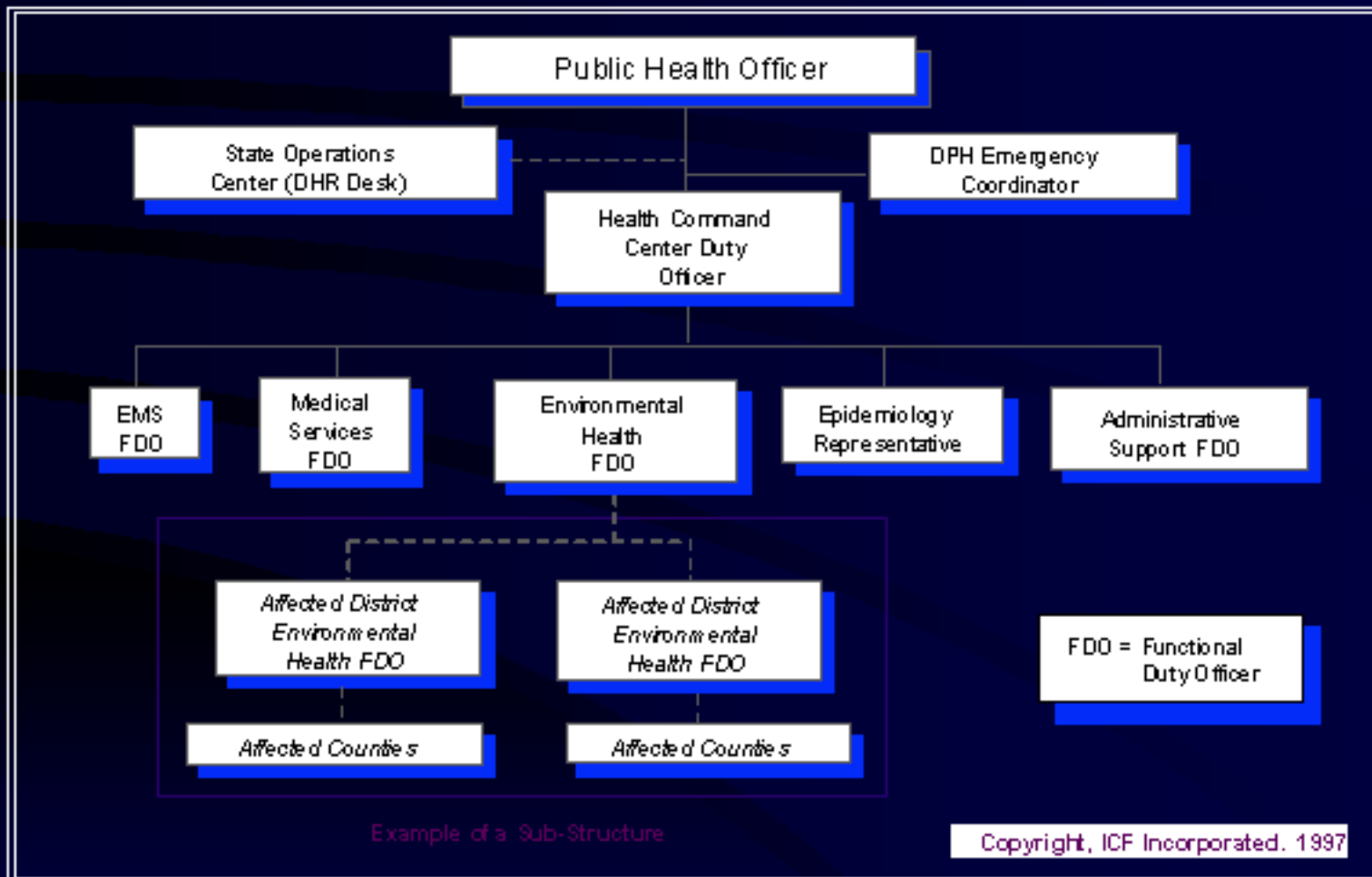
- Many **different procedures and methods** existed around the state
- Public health staff were **not active participants** in emergency planning, preparedness, and response in the state
- Exceptions in EMS, hurricane-prone coastal areas

Methods: Procedures Development

- Incorporated research phase findings
- Determined likely disaster scenarios
- Established:
 - Management structure
 - Functional positions
 - EOC procedures
 - Coordination mechanisms



Incident Management System



Methods: Implementation

- **Summer 1996:** Initial testing during Summer Olympics hosted in Atlanta, GA
- **Spring 1997:** Full roll out of system; trained 600 public health employees and two one-day tabletop exercises
- **Spring 1998:** Recently analyzed real-time activations of system during floods and tornadoes

Conclusion: Lessons Learned

- **Make system easy to use**
 - Use terms familiar to public health staff
 - Identify and build on existing mechanisms
- **Emphasize coordination and maintenance**
 - Coordinate with external emergency response partners
 - Test, exercise, and utilize real emergencies to introduce and maintain the system