

Hi, this is Chris Micheli with the Sacramento governmental relations firm of Aprea and Micheli and an adjunct professor at McGeorge School of Law. Today's podcast is on the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, also known as OES. The Governor's Office of Emergency Services is established in the California Government Code. You can find it in Title II Division 1 Chapter 7, Article 5, way down there. It covers sections 8585 to 8589.7 and pursuant to section 8585, OES is established in state government within the governor's office itself. It's under the supervision of a director and the Government Code in this area in Article 5, references the former Office of Homeland Security, which is now under OES. And in addition, OES succeeded to the former California Emergency Management Agency. Also pursuant to state law, OES is considered a law enforcement organization, and it can receive criminal intelligence information as well.

OES is specifically responsible for the state's emergency and disaster response services, for any natural, technological or man-made disasters or emergencies. And according to OES, California faces numerous risks and threats to its people, property, the economy, the environment. Moreover, California is prone to earthquakes, floods, wildfires, droughts, public health emergencies, cybersecurity attacks, agricultural and animal disasters, and of course, threats to Homeland Security. According to the Government Code, it's the role of OES to take a proactive approach to addressing the risks, threats, and vulnerabilities facing the state of California, that form the basis of its mission and has been tested through real events.

So OES took on its current role and title in 1970, and it actually took over responsibilities from several other state departments. For example, in 2004, OES merged with the Governor's Office of Criminal Justice Planning and the old OCJP provided grants and funding to local communities. And then in 2009, OES took over the role of the Office of Homeland Security. And in 2013, OES took over the former California Emergency Management Agency, as well as the Office of Public Safety Communications.

Now, the OES Director pursuant to the Government Code, is actually charged with coordinating all the state disaster response, emergency planning, emergency preparedness, disaster recovery, disaster mitigation, and Homeland Security activities. And OES is required to establish various classes of disaster service workers, as well as the scope of duties for these different classes of workers. State law, again in the Government Code, requires OES to certify the accredited status of local disaster councils, and OES can enter into an agreement directly with one or more certified Community Conservation Corps, to perform emergency or disaster response services. Also, the Government Code requires OES to establish and lead the California Cybersecurity Integration Center.

What is that? It's primary mission is to reduce the likelihood and severity of cyber incidents that could damage or adversely impact California's economy, its critical infrastructure, and even public and private sector computer networks. And as you would imagine, the Cybersecurity Integration Center, is charged with developing a statewide cybersecurity strategy.

Another section of the Government Code requires OES and the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, called Cal Fire, to establish and lead the Wildfire Forecast and Threat Intelligence Integration Center. Also another code section that OES in cooperation with the State Department of Education, the Department of General Services and the Seismic Safety Commission, are required to develop an educational pamphlet for use in kindergarten through grade 14 personnel, to assist them in identifying and mitigating the risks posed by earthquake hazards. OES is also required to procure mobile communication translators, to enable mutual aid emergency response agencies to communicate effectively, while they might be operating on incompatible frequencies.

The Director of OES also administers the California State Nonprofit Security Grant Program, and OES is required by state law in the Government Code, to contract with the California Firefighter Joint Apprenticeship Program, and that responsibility is to develop a fire service specific course of instruction on the responsibilities of first providers to terrorism incidents that could occur around the state. Also,

OES has to use all state and local fair properties as condition might require. And another section of the Government Code requires OES to establish the state Computer Emergency Data Exchange Program. What on earth is that? Its responsibility is to collect and disseminate essential data for emergency management. And the Government Code also requires OES in consultation with the California Highway Patrol, as well as other state and local agencies, to establish a statewide plan for the delivery of hazardous material mutual aid. And then OES has to develop model guidelines for local government agencies and community-based organizations for their planning in order to develop disaster registry programs.

So as you can see from all these different roles and responsibilities and duties under the California Government Code, that OES, the Office of Emergency Services, is clearly the central point in state government for emergency reporting of spills, releases, hazardous materials, and of course coordinating with other state and local agencies in dealing with disasters and other states of emergency that occur on a frequent and regular basis in the state of California. Thanks for joining this overview of the Office of Emergency Services, under the governor's office.