

R³ Report | Requirement, Rationale, Reference

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Published for Joint Commission-accredited organizations and interested health care professionals, *R3 Report* provides the rationale and references that The Joint Commission employs in the development of new requirements. While the standards manuals also may provide a rationale, *R3 Report* goes into more depth. The references provide the evidence that supports the requirement. *R3 Report* may be reproduced if credited to The Joint Commission. Sign up for [email](#) delivery.

New and Revised Emergency Management Standards for Laboratory Programs

Effective **January 1, 2025**, new and revised emergency management requirements will apply to all Joint Commission-accredited laboratories. The Joint Commission began conducting a critical analysis of its “Emergency Management” (EM) chapter in late 2019. During the COVID-19 pandemic, The Joint Commission received many inquiries about emergency plans and response procedures. Based on the work already being performed on the EM chapter and the questions and issues that arose during the pandemic, the entire EM chapter has been restructured to provide a meaningful framework for a successful emergency management program. The changes in the EM chapter include a new numbering system, elimination of redundant requirements, and the addition of new requirements. This restructuring resulted in a reduction in the number of elements of performance by over 60% in the EM chapter for the laboratory program.

Engagement with stakeholders, customers, and experts

In addition to an extensive literature review and public field review, The Joint Commission sought expert guidance from the following groups:

- [Standards review panel](#) included representation from laboratories, including those from hospitals and/or health care systems. The members provided a frontline point of view and insights into the practical application of the proposed emergency management requirements.
- **Joint Commission workgroup** included laboratory program field directors, staff from the laboratory program Standards Interpretation Group, and staff from the Department of Standards and Survey Methods and Research.

The prepublication version of the EM requirements will be available online until December 30, 2024. After January 1, 2025, please access the new requirements in the E-dition or standards manual.

Emergency Management (EM) Chapter

Requirement

Standard EM.10.01.01: The laboratory’s leader(s) provides oversight and support of emergency management activities.

If the laboratory is part of a Joint Commission-accredited organization (such as a hospital, critical access hospital, or ambulatory care organization), this requirement is not applicable. However, the laboratory must demonstrate how it collaborates with the organization’s emergency management leader(s) on any laboratory-specific needs.

Rationale

The laboratory’s leaders need to provide oversight in the development and implementation of the emergency management preparedness and response as they are responsible for maintaining safe operations during an emergency and often need to make significant and timely decisions. The identification of an individual to lead emergency management activities is also important to ensure that critical components are addressed in the mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery phases and integrated throughout the laboratory.

References:*

- Association of Public Health Laboratories. (2015, June; modified April 2019). *A practical guide to dealing with laboratory floods*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/OS_PracticalGuideFloods_62015.pdf
- Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute. (2014, December; reviewed September 2019). *GP36-A: Planning for laboratory operations during a disaster; approved guideline*. <https://www.clsi.org/>
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*Not a complete literature review.

Requirement

Standard EM.11.01.01: The laboratory conducts a hazard vulnerability analysis (HVA) utilizing an all-hazards approach.

If the laboratory is part of a Joint Commission–accredited organization (such as a hospital, critical access hospital, or ambulatory care organization), this requirement is not applicable. However, the laboratory must demonstrate how it collaborates with the organization’s emergency management leader(s) on any laboratory-specific needs.

Rationale

Laboratories should continually evaluate their known risks and prioritize them to understand their vulnerabilities and prepare to respond to emergencies. The risk assessment includes an evaluation of the natural hazards, human-caused hazards, technological hazards, hazardous materials, and emerging infectious diseases that could impose a significant risk to a laboratory. The risks are prioritized to determine which of the hazards present the highest likelihood of occurring and the impacts those hazards will have on the operating status of the laboratory and its ability to provide services.

References:*

- Association of Public Health Laboratories. (2015, June; modified April 2019). *A practical guide to dealing with laboratory floods*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/OS_PracticalGuideFloods_62015.pdf
- Association of Public Health Laboratories. (2016, November; modified April 2019). *Clinical laboratory preparedness and response guide*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/WORK_BlueBook.pdf
- Burnham, CA., Kwon, J., Burd, E., Campbell, S., Iwen, P., & Miller, M. (2017, April 1). Are we there yet? Laboratory preparedness for emerging infectious diseases. *Clinical Chemistry*, 63(4), 807–811. <https://doi.org/10.1373/clinchem.2016.265850>
- Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute. (2014, December; reviewed September 2019). *GP36-A: Planning for laboratory operations during a disaster; approved guideline*. <https://www.clsi.org/>
- EisBrenner, T., Tipples, G., Kuschak, T., & Gilmour, M. (2020, October 1). Laboratory response checklist for infectious disease outbreaks-preparedness and response considerations for emerging threats. *Canada Communicable Disease Report*, 46(10), 311–321. <https://doi.org/10.14745/ccdr.v46i10a01>
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*Not a complete literature review.

Requirement

Standard EM.12.01.01: The laboratory develops an emergency operations plan (EOP) based on an all-hazards approach.

Note: The laboratory considers its prioritized hazards identified as part of its hazard vulnerability analysis when developing an emergency operations plan.

If the laboratory is part of a Joint Commission–accredited organization (such as a hospital, critical access hospital, or ambulatory care organization), this requirement is not applicable. However, the laboratory must demonstrate how it collaborates with the organization’s emergency management leader(s) on any laboratory-specific needs.

Rationale

A well-developed all-hazards emergency operations plan (EOP) guides the laboratory when responding to and recovering from a variety of emergency or disaster incidents. The EOP provides a management structure for the laboratory to operate under, staff activities to be carried out, and a description of how those activities should interact during an emergency. The EOP identifies what services the laboratory will continue to provide in the event of an emergency or disaster incident; however, some laboratories may be unable to safely provide laboratory services and would close until conditions allow safe operations.

References:*

- Association of Public Health Laboratories. (2015, June; modified April 2019). *A practical guide to dealing with laboratory floods*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/OS_PracticalGuideFloods_62015.pdf
- Association of Public Health Laboratories. (2016, November; modified April 2019). *Clinical laboratory preparedness and response guide*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/WORK_BlueBook.pdf
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Requirement

Standard EM.12.02.01: The laboratory has a communications plan that addresses how it will communicate during an emergency.

Note: The laboratory considers its prioritized hazards identified as part of its hazard vulnerability analysis when developing a communications plan.

If the laboratory is part of a Joint Commission–accredited organization (such as a hospital, critical access hospital, or ambulatory care organization), this requirement is not applicable. However, the laboratory must demonstrate how it collaborates with the organization’s emergency management leader(s) on any laboratory-specific needs.

Rationale

An effective communications plan describes how and when the laboratory will communicate information to its staff, patients, and community partners based on the type of emergency or disaster incident. The communications plan should account for the rapid evolution of an emergency or disaster and the need to consistently provide clear information regarding the emergency and the laboratory’s ability to provide services. The resources and tools used for communications are a critical element of disaster preparedness.

References:*

- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2015, June; modified April 2019). *A practical guide to dealing with laboratory floods*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/QS_PracticalGuideFloods_62015.pdf
- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2016, November; modified April 2019). *Clinical laboratory preparedness and response guide*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/WORK_BlueBook.pdf
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*Not a complete literature review.

Requirement

Standard EM.12.02.03: The laboratory has a staffing plan for managing all staff and volunteers during an emergency or disaster incident.

Note: The laboratory considers its prioritized hazards identified as part of its hazard vulnerability analysis when developing a staffing plan.

If the laboratory is part of a Joint Commission–accredited organization (such as a hospital, critical access hospital, or ambulatory care organization), this requirement is not applicable. However, the laboratory must demonstrate how it collaborates with the organization’s emergency management leader(s) on any laboratory-specific needs.

Rationale

The laboratory’s staffing plan should be activated in response to an emergency or disaster incident if the laboratory is capable of remaining open during the event. In preparation for an emergency or disaster incident, laboratories are better prepared to respond to an emergency or disaster incident if they have prepared and anticipated their staffing needs, resources, and availability. Some laboratories may have very limited staffing resources, which may require the laboratory to close until it can safely resume operations.

References:*

- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2015, June; modified April 2019). *A practical guide to dealing with laboratory floods*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/QS_PracticalGuideFloods_62015.pdf
- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2016, November; modified April 2019). *Clinical laboratory preparedness and response guide*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/WORK_BlueBook.pdf
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Requirement

Standard EM.12.02.05: The laboratory has a plan for providing laboratory services during an emergency or disaster incident.

Note: The laboratory considers its prioritized hazards identified as part of its hazard vulnerability analysis when developing a plan for laboratory services.

If the laboratory is part of a Joint Commission-accredited organization (such as a hospital, critical access hospital, or ambulatory care organization), this requirement is not applicable. However, the laboratory must demonstrate how it collaborates with the organization's emergency management leader(s) on any laboratory-specific needs.

Rationale

A well-thought-out plan that maintains a laboratory's ability to provide services and identify solutions for how it will continue to provide services during emergencies or disasters. Planning may include options for providing services at another testing facility or referring specimens or patient testing to other capable laboratory facilities if the laboratory can no longer provide services.

References:*

- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2015, June; modified April 2019). *A practical guide to dealing with laboratory floods*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/OS_PracticalGuideFloods_62015.pdf
- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2016, November; modified April 2019). *Clinical laboratory preparedness and response guide*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/WORK_BlueBook.pdf
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*Not a complete literature review.

Requirement

Standard EM.12.02.07: The laboratory has a plan for safety and security measures to take during an emergency or disaster incident.

Note: The laboratory considers its prioritized hazards identified as part of its hazard vulnerability analysis when developing a plan for safety and security.

If the laboratory is part of a Joint Commission-accredited organization (such as a hospital, critical access hospital, or ambulatory care organization), this requirement is not applicable. However, the laboratory must demonstrate how it collaborates with the organization's emergency management leader(s) on any laboratory-specific needs.

Rationale

Emergencies and disasters often create new and rapidly changing safety and security concerns. The plan for safety and security should include the possible need for heightening security measures, tracking and accountability of staff and patients, minimizing exposures to hazards, and safeguarding critical laboratory testing and supplies.

References:*

- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2015, June; modified April 2019). *A practical guide to dealing with laboratory floods*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/OS_PracticalGuideFloods_62015.pdf

- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2016, November; modified April 2019). *Clinical laboratory preparedness and response guide*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/WORK_BlueBook.pdf
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*Not a complete literature review.

Requirement

Standard EM.12.02.09: The laboratory has a plan for managing resources and assets during an emergency or disaster incident.

Note: The laboratory considers its prioritized hazards identified as part of its hazard vulnerability analysis when developing a plan for resources and assets.

If the laboratory is part of a Joint Commission–accredited organization (such as a hospital, critical access hospital, or ambulatory care organization), this requirement is not applicable. However, the laboratory must demonstrate how it collaborates with the organization’s emergency management leader(s) on any laboratory-specific needs.

Rationale

Access to resources can often be difficult when the needs in a community or region are greater than what are available locally. The laboratory’s plan includes continual assessment of how to obtain, allocate, mobilize, replenish, and conserve its resources and assets during and after an emergency or disaster incident, if it will remain open. Some laboratories may close until conditions allow for safe operations.

References:*

- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2015, June; modified April 2019). *A practical guide to dealing with laboratory floods*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/QS_PracticalGuideFloods_62015.pdf
- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2016, November; modified April 2019). *Clinical laboratory preparedness and response guide*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/WORK_BlueBook.pdf
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Requirement

Standard EM.12.02.11: The laboratory has a plan for managing utility systems during an emergency or disaster incident.

Note: The laboratory considers its prioritized hazards identified as part of its hazard vulnerability analysis when developing a plan for utilities management.

If the laboratory is part of a Joint Commission–accredited organization (such as a hospital, critical access hospital, or ambulatory care organization), this requirement is not applicable. However, the laboratory must demonstrate how it collaborates with the organization’s emergency management leader(s) on any laboratory-specific needs.

Rationale

Emergencies and disaster incidents can have a detrimental impact on the laboratory’s utility system(s), including loss of one or more utility systems. The list of utility systems that could potentially fail during an emergency includes heating, ventilation, and air conditioning; network connectivity; and refrigeration equipment. The laboratory must be prepared with alternate ways for providing essential or critical systems to maintain functional operations if it will continue to provide services during an emergency or disaster incident.

References:*

- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2015, June; modified April 2019). *A practical guide to dealing with laboratory floods*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/QS_PracticalGuideFloods_62015.pdf
- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2016, November; modified April 2019). *Clinical laboratory preparedness and response guide*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/WORK_BlueBook.pdf
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Requirement

Standard EM.14.01.01: The laboratory has a disaster recovery plan.

Note: The laboratory considers its prioritized hazards identified as part of its hazard vulnerability analysis when developing a disaster recovery plan.

If the laboratory is part of a Joint Commission–accredited organization (such as a hospital, critical access hospital, or ambulatory care organization), this requirement is not applicable. However, the laboratory must demonstrate how it collaborates with the organization’s emergency management leader(s) on any laboratory-specific needs.

Rationale

The disaster recovery plan is essential for providing strategies to quickly handle incidents, reduce downtime, and minimize financial loss so that the laboratory can continue to operate or return to full functionality after an emergency or disaster incident has occurred.

References:*

- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2015, June; modified April 2019). *A practical guide to dealing with laboratory floods*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/QS_PracticalGuideFloods_62015.pdf
- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2016, November; modified April 2019). *Clinical laboratory preparedness and response guide*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/WORK_BlueBook.pdf
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Requirement

Standard EM.15.01.01: The laboratory provides emergency management education and training.

Note: The laboratory considers its prioritized hazards identified as part of its hazard vulnerability analysis when developing education and training.

If the laboratory is part of a Joint Commission–accredited organization (such as a hospital, critical access hospital, or ambulatory care organization), this requirement is not applicable. However, the laboratory must demonstrate how it collaborates with the organization’s emergency management leader(s) on any laboratory-specific needs.

Rationale

Laboratories that plan education and training related to emergency management are better prepared for their next emergency or disaster incident. Effective education and training prepare staff to respond to a variety of emergencies and to quickly adjust to changing situations while continuing to provide safe care and services.

References:*

- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2015, June; modified April 2019). *A practical guide to dealing with laboratory floods*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/OS_PracticalGuideFloods_62015.pdf
- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2016, November; modified April 2019). *Clinical laboratory preparedness and response guide*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/WORK_BlueBook.pdf
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Requirement

Standard EM.16.01.01: The laboratory conducts annual exercises to test its emergency operations plan and response procedures.

Note: The laboratory considers its prioritized hazards identified as part of its hazard vulnerability analysis when developing emergency exercises.

If the laboratory is part of a Joint Commission–accredited organization (such as a hospital, critical access hospital, or ambulatory care organization), this requirement is not applicable. However, the laboratory must demonstrate how it collaborates with the organization’s emergency management leader(s) on any laboratory-specific needs.

Rationale

Conducting emergency management exercises improves staff skills and teamwork within a controlled testing environment and refines their knowledge and understanding of the emergency operations plan. This prepares staff

for a safe and effective response in the event of a real emergency or disaster incident. These exercises are used to test all facets of the emergency operation plan and should be comprehensive enough to test the laboratory's response capabilities to failure in order to identify deficiencies and opportunities for improvement.

References:*

- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2015, June; modified April 2019). *A practical guide to dealing with laboratory floods*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/QS_PracticalGuideFloods_62015.pdf
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Requirement

Standard EM.17.01.01: The laboratory evaluates and revises its emergency operations plan.

If the laboratory is part of a Joint Commission–accredited organization (such as a hospital, critical access hospital, or ambulatory care organization), this requirement is not applicable. However, the laboratory must demonstrate how it collaborates with the organization's emergency management leader(s) on any laboratory-specific needs.

Rationale

Laboratories that evaluate each event or exercise are better prepared for emergencies because they often find unknown risks or failures through these reviews. It is important to then update the emergency operations plan, policies, and procedures to correct these deficiencies and provide education and training to staff, as applicable. Improving the plan makes it more effective at sustaining critical operations and protecting lives.

References:*

- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2015, June; modified April 2019). *A practical guide to dealing with laboratory floods*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/QS_PracticalGuideFloods_62015.pdf
- Association of Public Health Laboratories (2016, November; modified April 2019). *Clinical laboratory preparedness and response guide*. https://www.aphl.org/aboutAPHL/publications/Documents/WORK_BlueBook.pdf
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