

# EDXL Distribution Element

## 1.1 Purpose

The primary purpose of the Distribution Element is to facilitate the routing of any properly formatted XML emergency message to recipients. The Distribution Element may be thought of as a "container". It provides the information to route "payload" message sets (such as Alerts or Resource Messages), by including key routing information such as distribution type, geography, incident, and sender/recipient ID's.

## 1.2 History

The Disaster Management eGov Initiative of the [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\)](#) determined in 2004 to launch a project to develop interagency emergency data communications standards. It called together a group of national emergency response practitioner leaders and sought their guidance on requirements for such standards. In June, 2004 the first such meeting identified the need for a common distribution element for all emergency messages. Subsequent meetings of a Standards Working Group developed detailed requirements and a draft specification for such a distribution element (DE).

During the same period the DM Initiative was forming a partnership with industry members of the [Emergency Interoperability Consortium \(EIC\)](#) to cooperate in the development of emergency standards. EIC had been a leading sponsor of the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP). Both organizations desired to develop an expanded family of data formats for exchanging operational information beyond warning.

EIC members participated in the development of the DE, and in the broader design of the design of a process for the development of additional standards. This was named Emergency Data Exchange Language (EDXL).

The goal of the EDXL project is to facilitate emergency information sharing and data exchange across the local, state, tribal, national and non-governmental organizations of different professions that provide emergency response and management services. EDXL will accomplish this goal by focusing on the standardization of *specific* messages (messaging interfaces) to facilitate emergency communication and coordination particularly when more than one profession is involved. It is not just an "emergency management" domain exercise.

It is a national effort including a diverse and representative group of local, state and federal emergency response organizations and professionals, following a multi-step process. Just as a data-focused effort targets shared data elements, the EDXL process looks for shared message needs, which are common across a broad number of organizations. The objective is to rapidly deliver implementable standard messages, in an incremental fashion, directly to emergency response agencies in the trenches, providing seamless communication and coordination supporting each particular process. The effort first addresses the most urgent needs and proceeds to

subsequent message sets in a prioritized fashion. The goal is to incrementally develop and deliver standards.

EDXL is intended as a suite of emergency data message types including resource queries and requests, situation status, message routing instructions and the like, needed in the context of cross-disciplinary, cross-jurisdictional communications related to emergency response.

The priorities and requirements are created by the DM EDXL Standards Working Group (SWG) which is a formalized group of emergency response practitioners, technical experts, and industry.

The draft DE specification was trialed by a number of EIC members starting in October, 2004. In November, 2004, EIC formally submitted the draft to the OASIS Emergency Management Technical Committee for standardization.