Joint Commission Dropped the Written EOC Plans. The Work Did Not Go Away.

THE DIRECT ANSWER

Effective January 1, 2026, Joint Commission's Accreditation 360 hospital and critical access hospital manuals retired the standalone Environment of Care and Life Safety chapters and consolidated physical environment standards into one Physical Environment chapter aligned with CMS Conditions of Participation. Joint Commission no longer requires written management plans for safety, security, hazardous materials and waste, utilities, and medical equipment, but surveyors still evaluate your fire response plan, water management plan, and emergency operations plan—and the underlying compliance work did not disappear.

WHAT ACTUALLY CHANGED

- Fire response plan
- Water management plan
- Emergency operations plan

WHAT THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT CHAPTER STILL EXPECTS

- Joint Commission stated that the requirements themselves did not vanish with the chapter titles. Hospitals remain subject to CMS hospital Conditions of Participation .

FIELD QUESTION

Are hospitals still required to keep written Environment of Care management plans after January 1, 2026?

No—for Joint Commission–accredited hospitals and critical access hospitals, the January 2026 Environment of Care News states written management plans are no longer required for safety, security, hazardous materials and waste, utilities, and medical equipment. Ambulatory care organizations still need them. CMS and relocated Joint Commission standards still require the underlying programs even when the plan binders are optional.

From Healthcare Facility Hub - free, like everything on the site. The full article is at the link below.

Caution: codes, editions, and targets vary by facility and authority having jurisdiction (AHJ). Figures marked as common practice are facility targets, not code requirements. Confirm against your AHJ and the current code text before acting.