The Office of Disability Integration and Coordination (ODIC) encourages emergency management practices throughout every step of the disaster cycle to include people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. ODIC provides guidance, tools, and strategies that integrate and coordinate emergency management practices with emergency managers and planners. By planning for diverse populations, our nation can be better prepared for emergency situations.

ODIC’s 70 disability integration experts include 20 American Sign Language Interpreters and four Certified Deaf Interpreters. FEMA interpreters provide accessible information—at disaster recovery centers, community and town hall meetings, and other public venues—to people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

In 2015, ODIC developed a series of performance measurement tools in partnership with an interagency fellowship program. The tools, tested extensively during a tabletop exercise, were designed to improve ODIC’s ability to meet the needs of all disaster survivors, including people with disabilities and others with access and functional needs. Also, in 2015, ODIC celebrated its fifth anniversary.

In 2014, ODIC added four Certified Deaf Interpreter positions and assisted in developing three training courses on disability-inclusive emergency management for state and local emergency managers and FEMA staff members.

ODIC staff increases FEMA’s ability to support inclusive emergency management practices by:

- Advising and collaborating with local, state, and regional partners to achieve inclusive, community-wide emergency planning, disaster response, recovery, and mitigation against disasters.
- Developing and conducting training courses that promote disability-inclusive emergency management.
- Assisting state emergency managers and shelter planners concerning functional needs support services that meet access and functional needs in general population shelters.
- Advising leadership at federal centers that coordinate response to a disaster.
- Providing expertise to FEMA and disaster-impacted states about strategies to meet life-saving and life-sustaining needs including early warning, communication access, evacuation, and transportation needs.
- Assessing sites for FEMA buildings and disaster recovery centers—which are one-stop centers in communities where disaster survivors can obtain information about recovery resources—to ensure that they meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements for physical, programmatic, and effective communication access.
- Providing expertise regarding temporary emergency housing and long-term recovery for equal access to emergency management programs and services.

For more information, visit the ODIC webpage or the FEMA Multimedia Library, or send an e-mail to fema-disability-integration-coordination@fema.dhs.gov.

“FEMA’s mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.”

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