



FEMA

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Contact: FEMA News Desk
202-646-4600

Fact Sheet

DISASTER OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE

The mission of FEMA's Disaster Operations Directorate is to coordinate and provide the core Federal disaster response capability needed to save lives, reduce suffering, and protect property in communities throughout the Nation that have been overwhelmed by the impact of a major disaster or emergency, regardless of cause. The Disaster Operations Directorate must ensure that Federal emergency response systems and capabilities are properly poised to lean forward to support States and communities overwhelmed by disasters and emergencies. Key functions include:

- Providing the leadership necessary to integrate the Nation's emergency response teams, systems, and capabilities into a comprehensive, coordinated operational capability to provide an effective and efficient response to major disasters or emergencies;
- Coordinating all Federal emergency management disaster operational planning and programs to ensure the delivery of immediate emergency assistance to support individuals and communities;
- Executing the disaster operations mission through three main program areas – Operations Management, Field Operations and Disaster Emergency Communications.

Core Responsibilities

Operations Management – Plans, manages, coordinates, and executes capabilities that support disaster response operations, exercises, and special events to ensure development of an effective overall national all-hazards response system and capability. Operations management provides 24/7 warning and notification capabilities; overall disaster response direction, command and control, and situational reporting capabilities to support emergency and non-emergency disaster response activities requiring potential or actual National response operations; and critical National-level, operational, catastrophic and special event planning.

Field Operations – Manage and support National and field-level team responses to disasters, emergencies and special events. Key Field operation activities ensure the operational readiness of the disaster response teams; deployment of teams to coordinate disaster response activities providing situational awareness and coordinating the integrated inter-jurisdictional response in support of the affected State(s) or territories; deployment of specialized emergency response teams to provide leadership in the identification and provision of Federal assistance; coordination of the deployment, tracking, and credentialing of all response teams; and coordination of the national, all-hazards capability to locate, extricate, and stabilize victims of structural collapse/disaster situations resulting from natural or human causes.

Disaster Emergency Communications – Provides tactical disaster emergency communications capabilities to support all-hazard disaster response and national security emergency requirements. This includes overall responsibility for deploying, installing, operating, maintaining, and protecting telecommunications and operations assets needed to respond to all-hazards disasters and support of planned special events; ensuring continuity of disaster emergency communications through FEMA Regional fixed facilities positioned throughout the Nation; supporting the disaster emergency communications needs of State and local governments; establishing Joint Field Offices (JFO) and providing for their continuing operational communications and systems needs; and aiding in evaluating post-disaster communications needs in support of the restoration of the communications infrastructure.

Disaster Response Planning

- *Operational Planning* – Includes development of hazard-specific contingency plans, coordination of operational level all-hazards contingency plan execution, and forecasting and analyzing potential events and trends. Incorporates hurricane planning, pandemic influenza planning, planning for an anthrax or nuclear attack, as well as other specific scenarios. Operational planning is a core competency of the New FEMA. Operational planners perform sophisticated operational analyses, analyze trends and improve planning for the response to ongoing and future events. Planners also provide this same capability in the regions.
- *Catastrophic Disaster Response Planning* – Geographic-specific catastrophic disaster response planning focused on four areas – Southeast Louisiana, the Eight-State New Madrid Seismic Zone, the State of Florida, and the State of California. This planning identifies high risk areas, examines loss estimates, assesses current disaster response capabilities, identifies anticipated response shortfalls, and develops Federal, State, tribal, and local comprehensive planning strategies.
- *Evacuation Planning* – Development of overall guidelines to enable evacuation of large numbers of people in incidents requiring a coordinated Federal response. Focuses on synchronization of Federal, State, tribal, and local emergency evacuation plans and planning requirements; evacuation; Agency roles and responsibilities; and integration of Federal, State, tribal, and local mass evacuation disaster operations support.
- *Gap Analysis Program (GAP)* – Program developed using a consistent, national approach to determine asset gaps at the local, State, and National levels. Initial focus on seven areas: debris, interim housing, sheltering, evacuation, commodity distribution, medical, and communication/fuel in 18 hurricane-prone States. GAP has been expanded nationwide to address all-hazards.

Response Teams/Assets

FEMA's Disaster Operations Directorate is responsible for managing multiple disaster response teams and assets that can be immediately deployed to support State and local response operations. The capability of teams and systems to execute the disaster response mission is continually tested through multi-agency, tribal, State and local exercises. Several different types of disaster response teams can be deployed to support disaster response, as discussed below. In accordance with the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006, FEMA is developing Incident

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Management Assistance Teams (IMAT), a next generation of rapidly deployable interagency national and regional emergency response “strike” teams. These new teams will eventually replace existing Emergency Response Teams (ERT) at the national and regional level and the Federal Incident Response Support Teams (FIRST), and are designed to provide a forward Federal presence to better manage and coordinate the national response to catastrophic incidents. FEMA teams and assets include:

- *Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT)* – Dedicated teams consisting of 26 members (National) and 15 members (Regional) that are rapidly deployable to an incident or incident-threatened venue to provide leadership in identification and provision of Federal assistance and support; coordinate and integrate inter-jurisdictional response; and possess the capability to provide initial situational awareness for decision-makers. IMATs can be deployed within two hours/on scene within 12 hours to support the local incident commander in establishing unified command. Three National and ten Regional IMATs will be established.
- *Emergency Response Teams-National (ERT-N)* – National-level Teams consisting of approximately 32 individuals from FEMA Headquarters and the Regions that respond to significant disaster incidents to help coordinate disaster response activities and deployment of national response assets and resources.
- *ERT-Advanced (ERT-A)* – Teams in each FEMA Region, made up of approximately 25 individuals that can be deployed in the early phases of an incident to work directly with States to assess the disaster impact, gain situational awareness, help coordinate response, and respond to specific State requests for assistance.
- *Federal Incident Response Support Team (FIRST)* – Two emergency response teams of 5 individuals that can be rapidly deployed to an incident to provide the core preliminary on-scene Federal management and support the local incident commander to ensure an integrated inter-jurisdictional response. FIRST are being subsumed into the IMATs.
- *Hurricane Liaison Team (HLT)* – Team at the National Hurricane Center that facilitates information exchange among all levels of government during hurricane disasters.
- *Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Task Forces* – 28 National Task Forces staffed and equipped to assist State and local governments with search and rescue operations. Task forces are WMD capable, self-sufficient for 72 hours, and sponsored by local fire and rescue departments through cooperative agreements with FEMA.
- *Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS)* – Response capability consisting of a flexible mix of vehicles, staff, and resources designed to meet all hazards and national security emergency requirements--telecommunications, life support, logistics, operations, power, etc. MERS detachments and assets are located in: Bothell, WA; Denton, TX; Denver, CO; Frederick, MD; Maynard, MA; and Thomasville, GA.
- *Pre-positioned Equipment Program (PEP)* - Standardized equipment pods pre-positioned in eight geographic areas to support States and localities in weapons of mass destruction and other disaster events. PEP Pods include equipment such as personal protective, decontamination, detection, technical search and rescue, law enforcement, medical, interoperable communications, and other emergency response equipment.

Command and Control

FEMA manages a network of operations centers to coordinate and sustain response operations; maintain situational awareness and a common operating picture for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and FEMA leadership; facilitate information sharing between FEMA and non-FEMA entities; and provide internal and external stakeholders a consolidated, consistent, and accurate status of on-going incidents, responses or potential events. The key components of this network are the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) in FEMA Headquarters; the Regional Response Coordination Centers (RRCC) located in each of the 10 FEMA Regions; the FEMA Operations Center (FOC) located at the Mt. Weather Emergency Operations Center (EOC); the five strategically located MERS Operations Centers (MOC); and the Logistics Management Center (LMC) at FEMA Headquarters.

- *National Response Coordination Center (NRCC)* – Multi-agency team operating from FEMA Headquarters that functions as the operational component of the DHS National Operations Center (NOC). The NRCC coordinates personnel and resource deployments to support disaster operations and prioritizes interagency allocation of resources. It also maintains situational awareness linkages with regional, State, and local partners and 24/7 watch team.
- *Regional Response Coordination Centers (RRCC)* – Regionally-based (in all 10 regions) multi-agency coordination centers that perform a complementary role to NRCC. Provide situational awareness information, identify and coordinate response requirements, perform capabilities analysis, and report on status of Federal disaster response. Deploy staff to initiate Federal support, facilitate initial delivery of goods and services, and facilitate “in-theater” interagency resource allocation and coordination.
- *FEMA Operations Center (FOC)* – Centralized point of management to collect, analyze, and disseminate time-critical information to key emergency management decision-makers in support of mission requirements. Actively supports the NRCC by maintaining a full-time, 24/7 operation. Main functions include providing warnings about domestic and world-wide events; facilitating information flow between FEMA and NRF partners; alerting and activating response teams; and notifying and reporting known facts to FEMA and DHS staff about all-hazards events.
- *MERS Operations Centers (MOC)* – The MOCs provide 24/7 support to deployed MERS detachments and act as a liaison to FEMA Regional Response Coordination Centers. Each MOC serves as an initial point of contact for Federal, State, and local governments; receiving, processing, managing, and disseminating critical command and control information before, during, and after a crisis or incident. The MOC is an integral part of the FEMA information management system for all-hazards response operations.

Interagency Coordination

Under the National Response Framework (NRF), Federal departments and agencies and the American Red Cross are grouped by capabilities and types of expertise, into Emergency Support Functions (ESF) to provide the planning, support, resources, program implementation, and emergency services that are most likely to be needed during a disaster. FEMA coordinates ESF emergency management resources and has invested substantial time in meeting with the ESFs through the auspices of the Emergency Support Functions Leadership Group (ESFLG). Disaster

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Operations holds quarterly meetings with the ESFLG to facilitate collaborative planning to ensure interagency coordination and communication; focus on developing strategic, time-sequenced plans of preparedness and response; and ensure ESFs are prepared to execute their plans and commence operations consistent with the NRF.

During response operations, FEMA uses the interagency “Mission Assignment (MA)” process to task and reimburse other Federal Departments and Agencies to provide essential disaster response assistance. Through this MA process, the ESFs are assigned missions they are expected to implement in order to save lives, protect property, and deliver disaster response assistance. Greater emphasis has been placed on the MA process to include development of Pre-Scripted Mission Assignments (PSMAs), a mechanism used to facilitate rapid response. In 2006, FEMA had a total of 44 PSMAs with 2 Federal agencies in place for support for Hurricane Season. Since then, FEMA has increased the number of PSMAs to 223 (in coordination with 31 Federal agencies). This support ranges from heavy-lift helicopters from the Department of Defense, to generators from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, to Disaster Medical Assistance Teams from HHS, and Emergency Road Clearing Teams from the U.S. Forest Service. By expanding the development of PSMAs, FEMA is now better prepared to support tribal, State and local governments in disaster response.

The Department of Defense (DoD) plays a key role supporting FEMA in overall planning, coordinating and integrating Defense Support to Civil Authorities with local, State and Federal agencies. The DoD focus in domestic disaster response is on providing homeland defense, supporting civil operations, and coordinating “in-theater” security activities designed to protect the American people and their way of life. DoD has assigned liaison officers to FEMA Headquarters to ensure effective coordination of activities. Defense Coordinating Officers, supported by Defense Coordinating Elements, are assigned to FEMA’s regions to ensure military coordination at the regional level. FEMA has two full-time representatives at USNORTHCOM to coordinate disaster response activities.

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