



FEMA

Fact Sheet

DISASTER OPERATIONS DIRECTORATE

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Disaster Operations Directorate (DOD) is responsible for coordinating and facilitating the federal disaster response activities needed to save lives, reduce suffering and protect property in communities across the country that have been overwhelmed by a major disaster or emergency.

The directorate recently has established a new generation of disaster response teams called Incident Management Assistance Teams (IMATs). IMATs were developed from an expanded concept of the former Emergency Response Teams (ERT) and the Federal Incident Response Support Teams. The new IMATs are full-time, rapid response teams with dedicated staff able to deploy within two hours and arrive at an incident within 12 hours. Their role is to support the local incident commander, coordinate federal response activities and provide information about the situation and current conditions to FEMA leadership. Two national and three regional teams are now operational.

Over the past two years, FEMA's DOD has enhanced coordination and connectivity with its interagency, military and DHS partners through upgrades to its network of operations centers. Operations centers at the national and regional levels are responsible for coordinating and sustaining response operations; maintaining situational awareness and a common operating picture; facilitating information sharing between FEMA and non-FEMA entities; and providing internal and external stakeholders a consolidated, consistent, and accurate status of on-going incidents, responses or potential events.

Full staffing of the 24/7 National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) Watch Center and the Regional Response Coordination Centers (RRCC), upgrades to information technology and video-teleconferencing capabilities has greatly improved our ability to provide seamless connectivity with all of our partners. It has also increased our effectiveness in coordinating and exchanging information critical to ensuring smooth disaster response operations.

DOD's new emphasis on operational planning has been critical to the improvement of the agency's disaster response planning and operations. Operational planners at Headquarters and in the Regions are responsible for horizontal and vertical planning across all levels of government and ensuring continuity between long range planning, current operations planning, and field element incident action planning.

FEMA also has been coordinating closely with its federal partners to expand the number of Mission Assignments that have been prepared in advance to facilitate rapid response to incidents. FEMA now has 236 pre-scripted mission assignments with 33 departments and agencies, up from 44 in 2006. The Gap Analysis Program (GAP)

is another critical operational planning capability designed to identify limitations at the local, state and national levels that could impede response operations. The objective is to strengthen the capabilities of states and to reduce their reliance on federal support by developing creative solutions that leverage the capabilities of states and local jurisdictions and the private sector. GAP has since been expanded beyond the hurricane-prone states to include all states and encompass all hazards incidents.

The Disaster Operations Directorate coordinates frequently with its interagency partners through ongoing meetings of the Emergency Support Function Leaders Group and Regional Interagency Steering Committees. The Department of Defense plays an especially critical role, supporting FEMA in overall planning, coordinating and integrating Defense Support to Civil Authorities. This coordination has substantially increased in the past several years and the number of liaisons who support FEMA, from DoD as well as other federal departments and agencies has substantially increased in the last several years.

In another significant development, the Disaster Operations Directorate has established a formal Disaster Emergency Communications (DEC) program at the Headquarters and Regional level, which is designed to coordinate federal all-hazards tactical emergency communications support for state, local and tribal emergency responders during major incidents. The DEC program is designed to ensure that disaster emergency communications and tactical interoperability capabilities can be rapidly and effectively provided to protect people and property; ensure the adequacy of FEMA's own emergency communications capabilities; and help our state, local, and tribal partners develop their own capabilities. Regional Emergency Communications Coordination Working Groups have been established to better support states in planning for and responding to disasters.

FEMA leads and supports the nation in a risk-based, comprehensive emergency management system of preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation, to reduce the loss of life and property and protect the nation from all hazards including natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters.