



FEMA

9325.1

RECOVERY POLICY

- I. TITLE:** Disaster Survivor Assistance
- II. DATE OF ISSUANCE:** December 13, 2013
- III. PURPOSE:** This policy provides an overview of the Disaster Survivor Assistance (DSA) program for FEMA employees and other whole community partners, and outlines the operational framework for DSA Crews. It outlines the DSA mission, essential functions, organization structure, and deployment and employment criteria, describes reporting protocols and communications support needed, and defines roles and responsibilities of FEMA Headquarters and Regional staff supporting the DSA program.
- IV. SCOPE AND EXTERNAL AUDIENCE:** This policy applies to emergency and major disasters declared on or after the date of issuance of this policy. It is intended to provide Agency-wide guidance regarding DSA to FEMA employees, State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial governments and whole community partners. This policy is applicable to Federal departments and agencies providing response and recovery support under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act) and other Non-Stafford Act support, and is intended to be consistent with United States laws, policies, and other related requirements
- V. AUTHORITY:**
- Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act);
 - Title 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Emergency Management and Assistance;
 - Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-295);
 - Sandy Recovery Improvement Act of 2013; and
 - Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- VI. DEFINITIONS**
- A. *Whole Community* – The term *whole community* (with regard to disaster resilience) refers to the sum of the people and the commercial, economic,



RECOVERY POLICY

- governmental, infrastructure, and social systems that make up a jurisdiction (FEMA Incident Management Support Keystone, January 2011).
- B. *Unified Coordination Group (UCG)* – Primary Federal or State organizational structure for managing and supporting disaster response operations at the field level (FEMA Incident Management Support Keystone, January 2011).
 - C. *Essential Elements of Information (EEIs)* – Comprehensive list of information requirements that are also needed to promote informed decision making. EEIs are prioritized to answer the essential questions of the UCG at that time in the incident (FEMA Incident Management Support Keystone, 2011).
 - D. *Critical Information Requirements (CIRs)* – Items of information regarding the situation and environment, which senior leaders need by a specified time to assist them in reaching decisions (FEMA Incident Management Support Keystone, 2011).
 - E. *Operations Section* – Manages the operations that coordinate the delivery of Federal assistance programs and services, including lifesaving assistance, life-sustaining assistance, individual assistance, public assistance and hazard mitigation assistance, environmental planning and historic preservation compliance, disaster emergency communication, staging of resources, community recovery, and other Federal support to supplement State, local and tribal government efforts (FEMA Incident Management Support Keystone, 2011).

VII. POLICY:

- A. **DSA Mission** - Build and sustain an expeditionary cadre that can address disaster survivor's immediate needs by:
 - 1. Establishing a timely presence;
 - 2. Providing in-person, tailored information and services;
 - 3. Providing referrals to whole community partners as needed;
 - 4. Collecting targeted information to support decision-making; and
 - 5. Identifying public information needs so critical messaging can be developed and disseminated.

The DSA Crews establish a timely presence on the ground in the affected areas to address disaster survivors' immediate and emerging needs by meeting



RECOVERY POLICY

survivors at their homes or in their communities. The DSA Crews are a professional “force multiplier” that support State, Local, Tribal, Territorial, and Federal requirements in the field. DSA Crews have the ability to quickly deploy in anticipation of (or immediately following) a disaster declaration and can provide operational awareness of conditions, needs, and activities in the affected area. DSA Crews report to the Operations Section and are guided by priorities set by the Unified Coordination Group. At a minimum, the DSA mission extends through the initial Individual Assistance (IA) registration period.

- B. DSA Essential Functions:** Based on direction from the Operations Section, DSA Crews concurrently perform the essential functions identified below in a timely manner to meet mission demands and survivor needs.
1. *Assess, Inform, and Report (AIR):*¹
 - a. Assess – Obtain ground truth to determine the most critical needs of disaster survivors and the community.
 - b. Inform –
 - i. Pre-disaster declaration (as directed by the Operations Section), provide timely reports relaying ground truth to designated leadership.
 - ii. Post-disaster declaration, ensure disaster survivors have an understanding of, and equal access to, the full range of assistance available to support their recovery.
 - c. Report – Provide the Operations Section with actionable, timely, and comprehensive summaries that identify survivor needs and describe any broad-based trends or need for increased support.
 2. *On-Site Registration Intake:* DSA Crews will register survivors for disaster assistance, provide guidance on the registration process and provide an overview of the assistance available through FEMA. DSA Crews will make every effort to complete the full registration intake process upon initial interaction with the survivor. If the survivor is not in a position to complete the registration process, DSA Crews will provide alternative

¹ AIR provides situational awareness/local needs assessment and is *not* a damage assessment.



RECOVERY POLICY

options for completion at a later date or refer them to the closest Disaster Recovery Center (DRC).

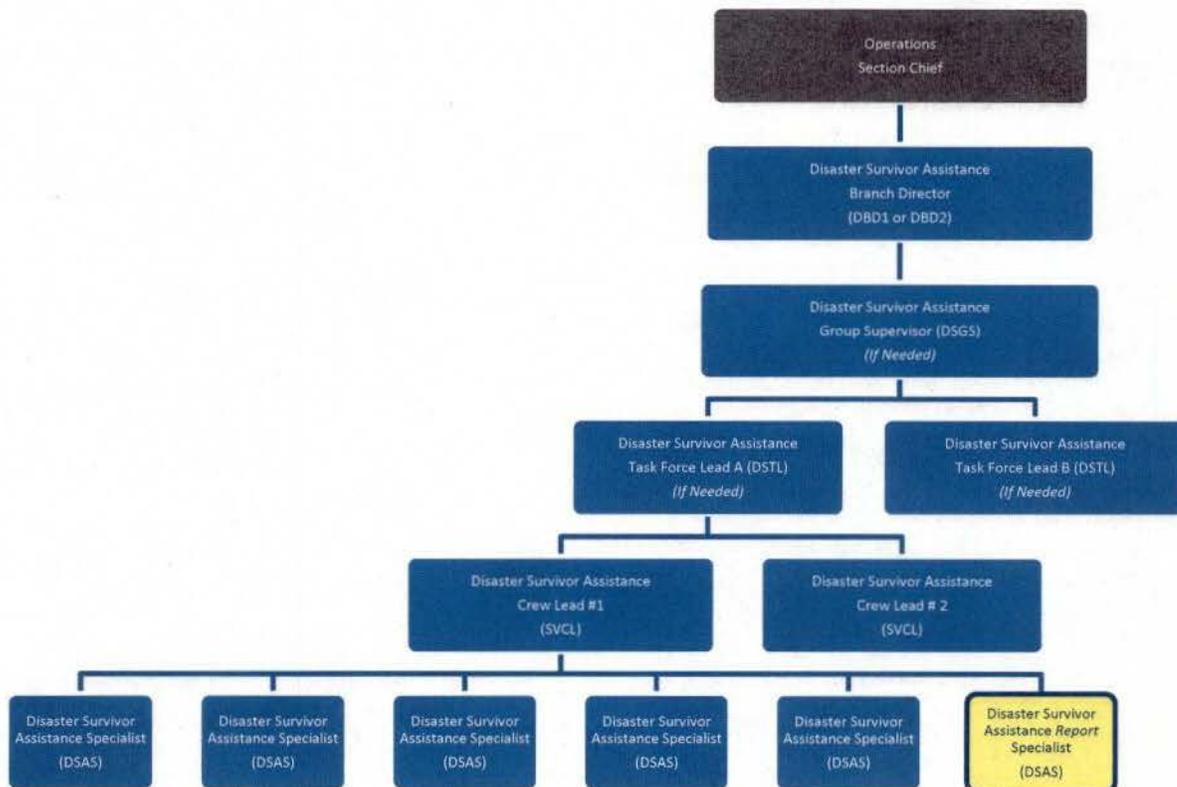
3. *Case Status Inquiries and Updates:* DSA Crews will verify previously submitted information, and will provide basic information about the status of the application, other assistance for which the survivor may be eligible, and next-steps for completing an unfinished application. DSA Crews can add new or change existing information in a survivor's record, e.g. correct the spelling of the survivor's name. DSA Crews will perform on-site identity verification before providing case status information to individuals.
4. *Pre- or Post- Registration Survivor Needs Assessment:* As DSA Crews engage with survivors in affected communities and conduct both registration intake and the AIR mission, they are ideally positioned to conduct survivor needs assessments and, as necessary, identify those immediate needs that may be filled with emergency assistance available through FEMA or other whole community partners.
5. *Referral to Whole Community Partners:* DSA Crews will make every effort to connect survivors with resources available through whole community partners. They will provide information and points of contact for assistance from other Federal agencies, State, Tribal, Local, Non-Governmental Organizations, Private Sector and Disability entities, etc.

C. **Organizational Structure:** The DSA Branch Director reports to the Operations Section Chief (OSC). DSA Crews are assigned functionally or geographically through the Branch/Division structure based on incident requirements. Personnel are also assigned based on incident requirements, and some positions may not be necessary depending on the size and complexity of the event.



RECOVERY POLICY

Figure 1: Sample DSA Organizational Chart



1. Crew Composition: DSA Crews may consist of DSA and Individual Assistance Reservists; FEMA Corps teams trained in the DSA program; FEMA full-time and CORE employees; National Processing Service Center (NPSC) field agents; and Disability Integration, Mitigation and Small Business Administration representatives. When disaster response and recovery operations require additional field staff, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Surge Capacity force personnel and other Federal agency personnel may be added to provide additional field capability.



RECOVERY POLICY

The basic field model for DSA field operations is based on a six to eight-person crew. The number of DSA Crews and management support requested is based on the size of the operation; request from State, Tribal, and Local governments; and the level of the incident.

2. Specialty Roles: DSA representatives may have specialized skills such as language translation, bereavement counseling, reports-writing, or experience with faith-based communities, disability services and programs, and public safety entities. Most specialty roles are ancillary and will require engaging with subject matter experts within FEMA.

3. JFO Coordination: As a functional element of the Operations Section, the DSA Branch Director works with all branches within the Operations Section to ensure accurate collection of information and unity of effort. The type of information to be collected by DSA Crews is directed by the Operations Section in coordination with the Planning Section. DSA Branch leadership will work closely with internal JFO partners, including but not limited to FEMA Individual Assistance (IA), External Affairs (EA), and Disability Integration to identify critical needs or emerging issues that the teams report through their respective chains of command.

D. Deployment/Employment: Prior to a disaster declaration and under the Operations Section's direction, the DSA Regional Representative will work with the affected Tribe/State to identify the initial requirements of the DSA mission for the affected community and develop a DSA initial execution plan. DSA will work with the Operations Section to plan and prioritize the DSA mission to focus on assisting individuals who may be disproportionately impacted by disaster, including seniors, people with disabilities and functional needs, families with school-age or younger children, and people with limited English proficiency (LEP) and low literacy.



RECOVERY POLICY

1. Deployment: The following criteria are considered when determining the need for activation and deployment of the DSA Crews pre- and post-declaration:
 - a. Anticipated IA declaration
 - b. Preliminary Damage Assessment information
 - c. Demographic data
 - d. Geographical data
 - e. Percentage of the following individuals that are disproportionately impacted:
 - i. Older Adults;
 - ii. People with disabilities;
 - iii. Others who also have access and functional needs; and
 - iv. People with limited English proficiency and low literacy.
 - f. Power Outages/Power Restoration
 - g. Road closures
 - h. Critical infrastructure damage
 - i. Number of shelters open (including shelter overnight population)
 - j. Evacuations

2. Deployment Metrics:
 - a. Within 24 hours of an IA declaration, or a request from the designated Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) or Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT) lead, the DSA Branch Director will identify the initial requirements of the DSA mission for the affected community and develop an initial execution plan in conjunction with the Tribe/State.

 - b. Within 48 hours of an IA declaration or a request from the designated FCO or IMAT, deployment orders are issued to deploy DSA Crews to the affected Tribe/State.

 - c. Within 4 hours of arrival to the affected area (if arriving before 1700), DSA Crews report to the DSA Branch Director and are



RECOVERY POLICY

engaged supporting field operations. If arriving after 1700, DSA Crews report to the DSA Branch Director and are engaged supporting field operations the next morning.

3. Phased Approach: Depending on incident requirements and based on the needs of State, Tribal, and Local governments, DSA Crews may be employed in a phased approach. Pre-declaration, the primary role of the DSA Crews will be to perform the AIR mission. Upon declaration of an IA disaster, following direction from the Operations Section, DSA Crews will work to expand their presence and directly assist survivors in the affected community, focusing first on assisting those individuals who may be disproportionately impacted.

DSA Crews can provide assistance to survivors at different community locations, including shelters, community centers, houses of worship, private sector locations, etc. They can support and augment staff at mobile and fixed DRCs, town hall meetings, or other organized community events as approved by the Operations Section.

- E. **Reporting Protocol**: DSA Crews in the field are responsible for updating and compiling reports to provide situational awareness and for relaying information regarding EEIs, CIRs, and community contacts. These reports will be compiled, completed, and maintained on a daily basis by the DSA Reports Manager.

1. DSA Crews complete the following reports:
 - a. *AIR Checklist*: List of EEIs and identified CIRs collected to provide situational awareness.
 - b. *Pre- or Post- Registration Survivor Needs Assessment*: Provides information on immediate unmet needs of survivors.
 - c. *Spot Report*: Critical issues immediately submitted (via phone/email) to DSA management to work with the affected program and Operations Section to resolve.
 - d. *Daily Summary Report*: Summation of DSA Crew activities within a specific community. It includes critical emerging issues, key



RECOVERY POLICY

community contact information, and cumulative information from the teams' AIR checklist, interactions with survivors and spot reports.

2. Geographic Information Systems (GIS)-based application: DSA Crews will be assigned to locations by the US National Grid (USNG) and use a GIS-based application for reporting. The USNG serves as a universal frame of reference for DSA reporting. DSA Crews will use mobile geo-tagging and photo-capable devices in the field to capture data that will be replicated instantly to the FEMA GeoPlatform, ensuring real-time information is available to support operations.
3. Reporting and the Unified Coordination Staff: Reports Specialists with the DSA Crews compile information from the AIR checklist, Pre- and Post- Registration Survivor Needs Survey, and Spot Reports into the Daily Summary Report. Once reviewed and approved by the Operations Section, the Daily Summary Report is submitted to the Planning Section for inclusion in situational awareness and other analysis products and shared with other internal JFO partners and State, Tribal, and Local entities as needed. Decision-makers, including the Operations Section, will use the information to determine if tactical changes should be made or if resource allocations should be adjusted.

F. Information Technology Support: DSA Crews will leverage technology, such as tablets and portable IT equipment (scanners, Mi-Fi devices, portable power supplies, stylus pens, keyboards, etc.) to remain mobile, allowing them to support disproportionately impacted survivors in the most heavily-affected areas.

1. Required IT Support: DSA Crews deployed to the field require initial mobile IT support to minimize program disruption. Initial operating capability to support DSA Crews is achieved through augmentation of JFO IT staff with IT Reservists or Permanent Full-Time personnel and contractors trained in mobile device account set up, application upload, and maintenance. Full operational capability to support DSA will be



RECOVERY POLICY

realized when standardized IT training is provided to all IT Reservists to enable them to support DSA requirements. Specified members of the DSA cadre will be trained to support equipment set-up, initial operating functions of the IT devices provided, and troubleshooting.

2. Equipment Support: Tablets and portable IT equipment (scanners, printers, Mi-Fi devices, portable power supplies, stylus pens, keyboards, etc.) will be sent to the field to support DSA operations. Requirements will be entered in Network Inventory and Optimization Solution (NIOS), and the Distribution Center's Disaster Information Systems Clearinghouse (DISC) will fulfill the requirement based on required delivery date.

G. Communications Support:

1. Limited Connectivity: Unpredictable data connectivity, limited access to power sources, and austere weather conditions have the potential to drastically impact DSA operations during disasters. DSA Crews require IT and communications support throughout field operations. In case of limited or no connectivity, alternate methods will be used to communicate with supervisors, and DSA Crews will provide registration services for survivors using alternative approaches.
2. Communications Requirements: In areas where connectivity is severely degraded or unavailable, DSA Crews may initially require tactical emergency communications capabilities support from the Mobile Emergency Response Support (MERS) units. The MERS Coordinator is the point of contact to request this support. The basic minimum requirement to support operations is commercial data connectivity, radio (cell, Satcom, etc.) coverage, and distributed fiber and wireless (e.g. WiFi) network (IP) coverage to support up to 10 DSA Crews composed of 6-8 individual employees working in different geographic locations.
 - a. **Data communication must have the following minimum capabilities:**
 - i. WIFI 802.11a/b/g/n
 - ii. Bluetooth 4.0 wireless technology



RECOVERY POLICY

H. **Desired End-State:** Survivors within the incident area are fully aware of all eligible FEMA assistance and whole community resources available to them during the registration period. Senior leaders at all levels are able to make informed decisions based on real-time information from DSA Crews.

VIII. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES:

A. Steady State

1. FEMA Headquarters (*HQ Recovery Operations and Readiness Coordination [HQ ROC]*): HQ ROC provides guidance, oversight, and management of the DSA program and defines, in coordination with Response Operations and Regions, readiness initiatives related to deployment, technology, planning doctrine, training, and budget support for the DSA Program. The DSA Reservist Program Manager is included in the HQ ROC.
2. FEMA Regions: The Regions are responsible for building DSA capabilities, which includes pre-planning with internal and whole community partners and designating a DSA Regional Representative.
3. DSA Regional Representative: The DSA Regional Representative –
 - a. Socializes the DSA concept within the Regions and builds partnerships with internal program offices and Tribal/State/Local partners;
 - b. Needs to understand policies and procedures in order to communicate recommended DSA courses of action;
 - c. Has a position on the Regional Incident Management Assistance Team (R-IMAT) and works with the impacted Tribe/State to identify the initial requirements of the DSA mission;
 - d. Attends all Regional IMAT trainings and exercises; and
 - e. Reports directly to the Regional Recovery Division Director (or designee) for program coordination.



RECOVERY POLICY

B. Incident Support

1. FEMA Headquarters: During activation, HQ ROC assumes responsibility for identifying, mobilizing and deploying cadre members in coordination with the Incident Workforce Management Division's (IWMD) policies and the respective Regional requirements. HQ ROC, in coordination with IWMD, is responsible for providing equipment to deployment teams for mission implementation. Initially, HQ ROC will coordinate with affected Regions to deploy HQ DSA Program Advisors, trainers and IT staff to support implementation of the DSA program.
2. FEMA Regions/DSA Regional Representative: In anticipation of, or following a declaration, the DSA Regional Representative (in coordination with the Regional Administrator, Regional Recovery Director, the Regional IMAT Team Leader/Operations Section Chief and/or designated FCO) will direct the activation of DSA assets to support operational needs. The DSA Regional Representative will transition into the DSA Branch Director role and work with the Operations Section, as well as State, Tribal, and Local governments, to determine resource needs dependent upon the size and complexity of the incident.
3. National IMAT DSA Branch Director: If a National IMAT is deployed to support incident operations, the National IMAT DSA Branch Director will oversee DSA operations, in coordination with the Operations Section Chief, respective Region and HQ ROC.

IX. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Recovery Directorate, Recovery Operations and Readiness Coordination

X. SUPERSESSION: This policy supersedes the Community Relations Operational Guidance dated June, 2012 the Community Relations metrics in the 2012-2013 Operational Guidance and Metric memo, and all previous guidance on this subject.

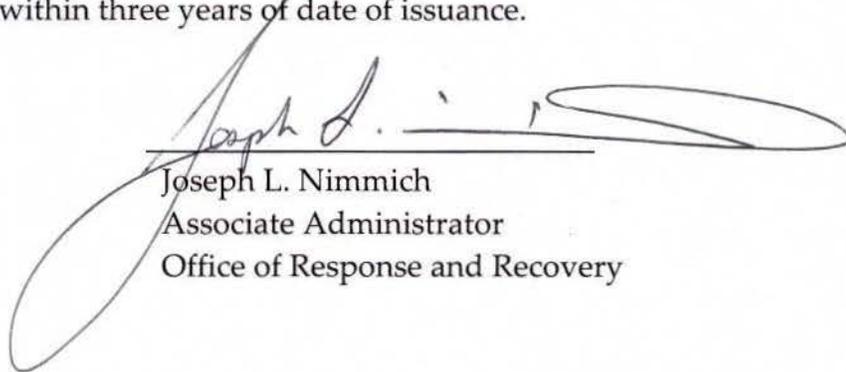


FEMA

9325.1

RECOVERY POLICY

- XI. **REVIEW DATE:** It is FEMA policy to review policies and reissue, revise, or rescind the policy within three years of date of issuance.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joseph L. Nimmich", written over a horizontal line.

Joseph L. Nimmich
Associate Administrator
Office of Response and Recovery