



# FEMA

OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
PARTNERS IN SHAPING RESILIENT COMMUNITIES



## Environmental and Historic Preservation (EHP) Fact Sheet: Roads and Bridges

Environmental resources, cultural institutions, and historic assets define communities and contribute to their well-being and unique character. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) plays a critical role by helping communities incorporate environmental stewardship and historic preservation into emergency management decisions. As disasters continue to challenge our nation and communities grapple with issues of preparedness and sustainability, FEMA offers expertise to ensure both legal compliance and informed local, State, Tribal, and national planning.

### Roads and Bridges and EHP Review

FEMA's Public Assistance (PA) program provides grant funding to eligible applicants for repair and replacement of non-Federal aid roads and bridges following a declared major disaster or emergency. This assistance can include emergency work needed to restore citizen access to homes and communities as well as permanent repair or replacement of damaged infrastructure. Restoration of a damaged bridge may include upgrades necessary to meet current codes and standards as defined by the State or local department of highways. In addition, mitigation measures to reduce risk of future damage can be incorporated into road and bridge repair or new construction.

Excavating, grading, and other construction activities have the potential to affect the environment and historic properties. In some cases, bridges or associated structures may be listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or construction may impact significant archaeological resources. In addition, staging sites, access routes, and designs that exceed original dimensions or locations must be reviewed for their potential impacts on surrounding fish habitats, wetlands, floodplains, and other resources.

### Considering EHP Impacts

Road and bridge emergency work and repair/replacement projects generally fit within one of FEMA's Statutory or Categorical Exclusions, requiring minimal documentation to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). However, the project must also be reviewed under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for the potential to affect historic properties (defined as buildings, archaeological sites, and districts eligible for the NRHP) as well as all relevant environmental laws, executive orders, and regulations, including the Endangered Species Act (ESA), Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and Executive Orders 11988 (Floodplain Management) and 11990 (Protection of Wetlands). Applicants should also contact the appropriate Federal, State, and local environmental agencies to determine permitting and other requirements. Required permits may include a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit (issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) and a State-issued Section 401 water quality certification. Applicants are responsible for obtaining all necessary permits related to project implementation. In situations where projects require changes in size, alignment or location of a road or bridge, a NEPA environmental assessment (EA) may be required to adequately document the range of potential impacts of the action.

### EHP Considerations for Roads and Bridges

When planning the repair, replacement, or hardening of roads or bridges, FEMA advises communities to:

- Coordinate with appropriate agencies to obtain all necessary permits prior to initiation of the project.
- Consider fish habitat, wetlands, and other downstream impacts when designing and constructing roads and bridges.
- Ensure that historic structures and archaeological resources are identified and environmental compliance review is complete prior to physical action taking place on the project.

## Roads and Bridges: Grant Application EHP Checklist

The checklist below describes project information that FEMA requires in order to complete EHP review of a road or bridge project.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Location</b>	State the location of the project, including both the site address and latitude/longitude in decimal degrees (e.g., 38.5342°N,-77.0212°W). Provide any maps (including Flood Insurance Rate Map) with project location marked, aerial imagery, or drawings showing the location of the project.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Description of Project Scope of Work</b>	Provide a scope of work for the project, including changes in size or alignment, staging areas, construction access, plans for grading, and the extent of ground disturbance anticipated, as well as any vegetation removal.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Age of Existing Structures</b>	Provide the original date of construction for bridges and any other related structures (i.e., nearby buildings, facilities, and roadways) that may be altered or affected by the project.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Photographs</b>	Provide clear, color photographs of the existing road or bridge and surrounding structures. Label photographs with the location and orientation of the camera relative to the road or bridge project location.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Agency Coordination</b>	Coordination with applicable resource agencies prior to submitting your application to FEMA can help streamline EHP review. Note any communications with resource agencies, such as the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, or State environmental management agencies, and provide copies of correspondence and permits.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>Additional Information</b>	Include copies of other relevant information, such as hydrologic and hydraulic (H&H) studies that address potential waterway or floodplain encroachment and resultant downstream impacts, environmental site assessments, design/code requirements, permits or permit requirements, environmental mitigation requirements, historic property designations, or historic building and/or archaeological surveys.

### Timeframes for EHP Review

Timeframes for EHP review vary depending on a project's potential to impact the environment and the complexity of the proposed project. For projects that do not affect historic properties or require consultation under Section 7 of the ESA, the review process generally takes 30 days after FEMA has received a complete project application with supporting documentation (including identification of necessary permits). The need to complete an EA will extend the review period a minimum of three to six months as it involves outside resource agencies and other stakeholders.

### EHP Best Practice: Iowa Historic Bridge Repair Project

The Sutliff Bridge, which was constructed in 1897-1898, is a three-span truss structure that spans the Cedar River in rural Johnson County, IA. In the spring of 2008, severe flooding caused heavy debris to collide with the bridge, dislodging one of the three 215-foot truss spans and knocking it into the Cedar River. The Johnson County Board of Supervisors applied to FEMA's PA program for funding to repair the bridge. A structural assessment and feasibility study was undertaken that resulted in various options for replacing the destroyed span. Johnson County Board of Supervisors and their consultants worked closely with FEMA, the State of Iowa, and the State Historic Preservation Office to design a project that met the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The approaches have since been replaced, and the replacement truss is under construction. New pedestrian guardrails have also been designed to meet AASHTO standards and avoid affecting the appearance of the historic bridge, which is scheduled to reopen to pedestrian traffic in the spring of 2013.

**Additional Resources:** For more information on EHP review and FEMA grant assistance, contact your State Emergency Management Agency or tribal office or visit <http://www.fema.gov/environmental-planning-and-historic-preservation-program>.