



2011-OPPA-01

FEMA CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION POLICY STATEMENT

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy statement is to establish an Agency-wide directive to integrate climate change adaptation planning and actions into Agency programs, policies, and operations.

II. Scope

This directive applies to all Agency activities and is intended to guide FEMA personnel responsible for the oversight and implementation of organizational plans, policies, and procedures.

III. Background

While the scope, severity, and pace of future climate change impacts are difficult to predict, it is clear that potential changes could affect our Agency's ability to fulfill its mission. The challenges posed by climate change, such as more intense storms, frequent heavy precipitation, heat waves, drought, extreme flooding, and higher sea levels could significantly alter the types and magnitudes of hazards faced by communities and the emergency management professionals serving them. Some specific areas where climate change could influence our capabilities and the need for our services are:

- *Impacts on mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery operations:* as coastal regions become increasingly populated and developed, more frequent or severe storms may increase the requirements for emergency services and response and recovery capacity.
- *Resiliency of critical infrastructure and various emergency assets:* continuity of operations, delivery of services, and emergency response efforts may be challenged and made increasingly complex by damages or disruptions to the interconnected energy and infrastructure networks.
- *Climate change could trigger indirect impacts that increase mission risks:* intensifying droughts, heat waves, and periods of heavy precipitation could create human and economic suffering that may lead to internal displacement, cross-border migration, and the spread of life-threatening diseases.

The need to address risks associated with future disaster-related events, including those that may be linked to climate change, is inherent to FEMA's long-term vision of promoting physical and economic loss reduction and life saving measures. Working within existing

statutes and authorities, FEMA will strive to be consistent in the Agency's incorporation of climate change adaptation actions and activities into on-going plans, policies, and procedures.

This policy statement identifies seven initial actions we will take to help integrate climate change adaptation considerations into our programs and operations. These actions also align with our vision of a Whole Community approach to emergency management, as it is expected that extensive collaboration with the public, all levels of government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and community organizations will be required.

IV. Policy and Procedures

- A. In addition to the actions taken pursuant to Executive Order 13514, *Federal Leadership in Environmental, Energy, and Economic Performance*, with respect to federal facilities, FEMA will undertake the below high-level actions to integrate climate change adaptation considerations into the Agency's programs, policies, and operations. These actions directly support the White House Council for Environmental Quality's (CEQ) Implementing Instructions for Federal Agency Climate Change Adaptation Planning and are designed to enhance our climate change awareness, further evaluate the effects climate change may have on FEMA programs and operations, and identify potential areas for future exploration.
1. **To enhance climate research, monitoring, and adaptation capabilities, FEMA will continue to establish partnerships with other agencies and organizations that possess climate science and climate change adaptation expertise.** FEMA will continue to develop and maintain partnerships that enable the Agency to monitor the projected effects of climate change, and communicate climate science data and research needs related to emergency management and disaster resilience. FEMA will also collaborate with other Federal agencies, State, Local, Tribal and Territorial (SLTT) partners, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, academia, and the international community to share lessons learned and develop best practices regarding climate adaptation.
 2. **FEMA will continue to study the impacts of climate change on the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and incorporate climate change considerations in the NFIP reform effort.** An initial 2-year study concluded that climate change is likely to have significant impacts on the NFIP; Special Flood Hazard Areas are projected to increase significantly across the nation, with impacts mounting over time as the number of policyholders are projected to double by 2100. In order to ensure the program serves the public most effectively, FEMA will continue efforts to understand the potential impacts of climate change on the NFIP and identify areas where future climate conditions can be included as part of the larger reform effort.
 3. **FEMA will evaluate how climate change considerations can be incorporated into grant investment strategies with specific focus on infrastructure and evaluation methodologies or tools such as benefit/cost analysis.** FEMA will evaluate methods

for addressing future climate conditions through its grant programs to SLTT entities. FEMA will also study how to introduce long-term climate change risks into the benefit/cost analysis methods that guide the awarding of grants.

4. **FEMA will seek to understand how climate change will impact local communities and engage them in addressing those impacts.** FEMA will proactively engage and partner with SLTT communities to gain a greater understanding of their climate change adaptation challenges and activities, and look for ways FEMA can take action to support them in those efforts.
5. **FEMA will promote building standards and practices, both within FEMA programs and in general, that consider the future impacts of climate change.** FEMA currently promotes programmatic guidance and standards for use by SLTT partners to mitigate hazards through regulation of building and infrastructure construction. The current standards and guidance, based on today's climate, may not anticipate the risks structures will face as the climate changes. Therefore, it is important to review guidance and standards to determine the feasibility of incorporating future climate change considerations, and encourage the integration of adaptation measures into local planning and development practices.
6. **Through partnerships with the climate science community, FEMA will evaluate the potential impact climate change may have on existing risk data and the corresponding implications for Threat Hazard Identification Risk Assessment (THIRA) development and operational planning.** Changes in the climate will affect the accuracy and practice of using historical records to predict the magnitude, location, and frequency of future hazards—with significant challenges for important analytic processes and decisions. In response, FEMA will continue to work with the climate science and risk analysis community to evaluate the impacts of climate change on the viability of existing risk data.
7. **FEMA will continue to pursue a flexible, scalable, well equipped, and well trained workforce that is educated about the potential impacts of climate change.** Changes in the frequency and magnitude of severe weather events could potentially strain FEMA resources. FEMA will continue to assess and address its staffing and equipment needs to create a more flexible workforce by increasing employee readiness, cross-training staff, and increasing the pool of employees who are qualified and trained to respond to disasters or other events.

V. Responsibilities

Roles, responsibilities, and timelines for completing each of the above actions will be set forth in the follow-on FEMA Climate Change Adaptation Implementation Plan.

VI. Definitions

Climate Change: According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change refers to “a statistically significant variation in either the mean state of the climate or in its variability, persisting for an extended period (typically decades or longer). Climate change may be due to natural internal processes or external forcings, or to persistent anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere or in land use.”

Climate Change Adaptation: The IPCC defines climate change adaptation as “the adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities.”

VII. Authorities

The Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended (6 U.S.C. 101 et seq.), the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 5121 et seq.), the President’s Executive Order 13514 of October 2009, the 2010 Climate Change Adaptation Report drafted by ICCATF, and the Instructions for Implementing Climate Change Adaptation Planning issued by the CEQ.

VIII. Responsible Office

The Office of Policy and Program Analysis is responsible for the coordination and oversight of all aspects of this directive.

IX. Supersession

None



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