



## Federal Emergency Management Agency Anti-Harassment Program

The following information outlines the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reporting requirements and approach to addressing harassment in any form and reporting harassment or discrimination in alignment with the [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\) Anti-Harassment Directive 256-01](#).

### **Living Our Core Values**

The core values that guide our actions at FEMA are **compassion, fairness, integrity, and respect**. Inherent in these values is a workplace free of discrimination, including prohibited harassment. FEMA leadership takes seriously its responsibility to develop and maintain a workplace where all personnel are treated with professionalism and respect. All FEMA personnel<sup>1</sup> have a responsibility to behave and engage with our colleagues in an appropriate, ethical and professional manner. When that does not happen – when expectations break down – problems arise.

### **Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) Anti-Harassment Program**

Within OPR is the Anti-Harassment Program, which promptly responds to and conducts investigations into all allegations of harassment. OPR investigates harassment and offensive or inappropriate activities as described in [DHS Directive 256-01](#).

OPR's top priority is to support our workforce and ensure that we all have a safe work environment. Employees can file an allegation of harassment or misconduct without fear of reprisal because FEMA protects employees from retaliation. Everyone in our agency is responsible for building a culture that reflects our core values of compassion, fairness, integrity, and respect.

### **FEMA's Commitment to a Harassment-Free Workplace**

Harassment is prohibited at FEMA, and the Agency is committed to providing a work environment free of discrimination and harassment. Consequently, the Agency prohibits harassment even if it does not rise to the level of harassment that violates the law. Although a single harassing utterance or act may not rise to a level that may be actionable under the law, it still has no place at FEMA.

As defined by [DHS Directive 256-01](#), reportable allegations involving harassment include, but are not limited to:

**Harassment.** Harassment includes any unwelcome conduct involving a protected basis which interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, offensive, or hostile environment. Protected bases include: race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity), national origin, age, disability (including an individual's need for workplace reasonable accommodations), protected genetic information, marital status, parental status, political affiliation, or prior protected Equal Employment Opportunity activity.

- **Examples** of unwelcome conduct include, but are not limited to, epithets, slurs, stereotyping, intimidating acts, bullying, ridicule, mockery, putdowns, acts of violence, actual or implied threats of violence, and the circulation or posting of written or graphic materials that show hostility due to protected status

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<sup>1</sup> FEMA personnel in this fact sheet refers to Stafford Act and Title V employees, as well as contractors employed by FEMA. FEMA personnel also includes partner organizations who the public may perceive as officially employed by FEMA or who are issued FEMA credentials for the purpose of supporting FEMA's statutory missions.

**Sexual Harassment.** Sexual harassment is one form of harassment prohibited by the Agency. Sexual harassment involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when submission to or rejection of such conduct is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of one's employment or is used as a basis for career or employment decisions affecting that person; or such conduct interferes with an individual's performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

- **Examples** of sexual harassment include: (1) offensive sexually-oriented verbal kidding, teasing, or joking; (2) repeated unwanted sexual flirtations, advances, or propositions; (3) verbal abuse of a sexual nature; (4) graphic or degrading comments about an individual's appearance or sexual activity; (5) offensive visual conduct, including leering, making sexual gestures, and the display of offensive sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons, or posters; (6) unwelcome pressure for sexual activity; (7) offensively suggestive or obscene text or chat messages, notes, or emails; (8) offensive physical contact such as patting, grabbing, pinching, or brushing against another's body; or (9) disseminating internet links with sexually-themed content

### **Procedures for Reporting**

Employees who believe they have been subjected to, or have witnessed harassing conduct, are obligated to immediately report the matter through one or more of the following avenues:

1. You may bring the concern to any supervisor or management official. Supervisors and management officials who receive reports of harassment must forward those allegations to OPR; failure to do so is in violation of the DHS Anti-Harassment Policy Statement and is subject to discipline.
2. You may report your allegations to OPR. OPR will acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the complainant when sufficient contact information is provided.
  - Via email: [FEMA-Misconduct@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-Misconduct@fema.dhs.gov)
  - Via telephone: 833-TELL-OPR (833-835-5677)
  - Via mail: FEMA Headquarters, 400 C Street, SW, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor (3SW), Washington DC, 20472-3155
3. You may report allegations to the DHS Office of Inspector General (OIG).

It is important to note that filing a harassment allegation with OPR does not preclude you from filing an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint with the Office of Equal Rights (OER). Filing an EEO complaint with OER is a separate process and employees are responsible for electing their preferred venue. An employee may report harassment to OPR and file an EEO complaint simultaneously.

Federal employees and applicants for employment should be aware that they must seek EEO counseling from OER within 45 days of the alleged act of discrimination. You can contact OER via email or phone or visit <http://www.eeoc.gov> for more information.

- Via telephone: 202-212-3535
- Via email: [FEMA-EqualRights@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-EqualRights@fema.dhs.gov)

### **It is Safe to Report**

While contact and confidentiality with OPR cannot be completely guaranteed, OPR will strive to ensure confidentiality whenever possible, except as necessary to conduct an appropriate investigation into the alleged violations or when otherwise required by law.

Federal law prohibits retaliation, which includes taking, failing to take, or threatening any unfavorable personnel action against an employee who reports harassment, or any other conduct that the employee reasonably believes violates any law, rule, or regulation; or constitutes gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.