



GETTING STARTED IN TRIBAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

FEMA's Quick Tip Guide for Starting a Tribal Emergency Management Program or Department

Welcome to FEMA's Tribal Emergency Program Planning Quick Tip Guide that contains preliminary information and resources to help develop, stand-up, and maintain a Tribal emergency program, department, or office. The guide includes why it is important to plan for emergencies and what steps can be taken to set up an emergency management program. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to planning for emergencies, there are resources and foundational tips that can help to get you started.

“Having an emergency management department empowers Native American Tribes to protect their members more effectively, preserve their way of life, and strengthen their resilience against various emergencies and disasters.” – Jake Trujillo, Emergency Management Coordinator, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



Learn From Leaders and Emergency Managers Across Indian Country

Emergency management programs can help build, sustain, and improve capacity and resilience while working to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from all hazards.

“It is always important for emergency managers to think ahead. Think about the ‘what ifs,’ and how you would manage a crisis whether it is from natural or man-made causes. Think about what resources you will need and where you can get them in times of need.” – Tim Zientek, Director of Emergency Management, Citizen Potawatomi Nation

“You need to understand that events often rise to a level of significance that we are not capable of responding to ourselves so outside resources and assistance are necessary.” – Kaylynn Gresham, Director of Emergency Management, Oneida Nation

“It doesn't matter if you're writing a plan, if you're dealing with an incident, or if you are training people, because everything is a challenge [when you wear many hats] and the success of that is how you meet the needs of the people you serve.” – Rod Mendes, Fire Chief, Yurok Nation



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“We are all a part of the solution for the future of our planet’s climate – through whole community collaboration and hazard mitigation planning – a shared goal of resiliency can be achieved for a sustainable future seven generations ahead.” – Nelson Andrews, Jr., Tribal Councilman, Emergency Management Director, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe

Quick Tips How to Build a Tribal Emergency Management Program

An emergency management program helps prepare communities before, during, and after a disaster happens.

Assemble a Team: Whether your program will include one or more staff members, find people who have the skills and experiences you need to be successful.

Have a Community Plan: Create an Emergency Operations Plan and a Continuity of Operations Plan. Present and discuss the plan with Tribal leaders so that they understand how crises will be managed. Plan to have supplies such as food, water, medications, generators, etc., in place for at least several days following a disaster.

Build Relationships: Other Tribal emergency managers can share their experiences and help with providing document templates, copies of their plans, and other resources. Reach out to federal emergency management partners like [FEMA’s Regional Tribal Liaisons](#) for technical assistance needs and [funding opportunities](#).

Be Transparent: Always keep your Tribal leadership informed and updated. Seek their guidance and provide them with regular reports and updates.

Be a Good Neighbor: It is important to build relationships with your neighbors – whether they are other Tribal Nations, municipalities, or counties – because you never know when you will need to work together to find or share resources, especially in times of disaster.

Learn the Process: Tribal Nations navigate federal and tribal laws, regulations, and policies to provide routine and emergency services to their communities as well as federal, state, and local governments. This complex system of administration can be compounded by a lack of critical resources and tribal emergency management staff that can add complexities to your plans.

Self-Sufficiency and Sovereignty: Having an emergency management department allows Tribal Nations to exercise sovereignty and self-determination. Tribal emergency management programs can tailor emergency response plans to fit unique cultural, geographical, and community needs without relying solely on external agencies.

Be Resilient: Resiliency is an innate characteristic of Tribal Nations. Resilient communities are better prepared for today’s risks and emerge stronger for tomorrow and generations to come.



Be Tribal Ready

Tribal Nations work hard every day to protect their communities, children, traditions, and future. Having an emergency management plan can help to build on this foundation. Emergency planning is more crucial than ever today, as the frequency and severity of natural disasters and climate change continue to rise globally. Emergency management planning provides the tools that allow us to recover faster from a disaster. Find the resources you need at FEMA's [Tribal Affairs Hub](#) and [Ready.gov](#) to get started.

