

**Unit 3**  
**Disaster**  
**Sequence of Events**





## Portal Questions

This unit discusses the sequence of actions that various levels of government take following a disaster.

If you believe you already know this information, answer the questions below and check your answers on the next page. If you answer each question correctly, you may proceed to the next unit. If you miss any questions or if you answer them correctly but want to increase your knowledge, read this unit before proceeding.

1. List four actions the local government takes when a disaster occurs.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. List three State government actions in response to a disaster that may lead to a Federal declaration.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. If Federal aid is requested by a State, what are three responsibilities of the Federal Government?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. List the common action phases of disaster response at the State government level.

# Portal Questions

## Answer Key

1. List four actions the local government takes when a disaster occurs.
  - *Provides the initial emergency response through its service agencies.*
  - *Activates the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP).*
  - *Coordinates the response with public and private organizations.*
  - *Notifies State emergency management of the scope of the situation.*
  - *Activates mutual aid.*
  - *Proclaims a local state of emergency.*
  - *Requests assistance from the State.*
2. List three State government actions in response to a disaster that may lead to a Federal declaration.
  - *Reviews and evaluates the local situation.*
  - *Determines whether the situation is beyond the capability of the State to handle.*
  - *Proclaims a state of emergency.*
  - *Requests Federal assistance.*
3. If Federal aid is requested by a State, what are three responsibilities of the Federal Government?
  - *Conducts Joint Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDA) with State and local governments.*
  - *Approves or denies requests for Federal assistance.*
  - *If Federal assistance is approved:*
    - *Activates the National Response Framework (NRF).*
    - *Establishes the Emergency Support Team (EST).*
    - *Identifies the Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) to respond.*
4. List the common action phases of disaster response at the State government level.
  - *Threat or Impact*
  - *Initial Assessment*
  - *Response*
  - *Recovery*

# Objectives

Upon completion of this unit, you will be able to do the following:

1. Identify the phases of the disaster assistance process.
2. Differentiate among the actions taken by the local, State, and Federal governments during disaster response and recovery.
3. Explain the key steps in the response process.

# Topics

Overview of Local, State, and Federal Responses to a Disaster

Outline of State Emergency Response and Recovery Activities

Key Steps in the Recovery Process

Learning Check

Preparation for State Coordinating Officer Course

# Overview of Local, State, and Federal Responses to a Disaster

## At the Local Level...

Disasters always occur at the local level. For some types of natural disasters, like slow-rising floods or approaching hurricanes, warning is available. Other disasters, like earthquakes, happen with little or no warning. The citizens in the area where the event occurs and their local governments and voluntary agencies are the first to have to cope with the damage.

The local government maintains control of all assets used in the response and recovery efforts, regardless of the source of those assets. Local governments must plan and prepare for this role with the support of the State and Federal governments.

### Local response includes...

1. Acting as the primary “first provider” of emergency response services.
2. Activating the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.
3. Coordinating the response with public and private organizations and agencies.
4. Notifying the State Emergency Management Agency of the situation by regularly submitting Situation Reports (SITREP).
5. Activating necessary local governments and organizations that are signatories to mutual aid compacts.
6. Activating response agreements with State and Federal departments or agencies.
7. Proclaiming a local state of emergency to authorize:
  - Using local resources
  - Expending local funds
  - Waiving the usual bidding process for goods and services
8. Requesting the State Emergency Management Agency to provide State and/or Federal assistance.



Owensboro, KY-- A waterbed is all that remains of this house that was directly in the path of a tornado that damaged more than 700 homes statewide.

Photo by Jason Pack / FEMA News Photo

## At the State Level...

When a local jurisdiction does not have the resources it needs to respond to a disaster, it turns to the State government for assistance. The State government may have many local jurisdictions requesting aid at the same time.

State governments serve as agents for the local jurisdictions if Federal disaster assistance is needed. Local governments cannot directly access Federal programs.

### State response includes...

1. Monitoring the situation.
2. Reviewing and evaluating local:
  - SITREPs
  - Response efforts
  - Requests for assistance
3. Activating the State EOC to coordinate available State assistance.
4. Determining if the situation is beyond the capability of the State and if Federal assistance is needed.
5. Proclaiming a state of emergency by the Governor that:
  - Activates the State Disaster Preparedness Plan
  - Provides for the use of State assistance or resources
  - Begins the process for requesting Federal assistance
6. Requesting Federal assistance. Requests can include:
  - A request for “emergency” or “major disaster declaration” under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended, or
  - A request to Federal agencies under their own authorities from existing or emergency programs, such as the Small Business Administration (SBA) or the Department of Agriculture (USDA)

## At the Federal Level...

When a disaster strikes and is so severe that the local government and the State government together cannot provide the needed resources, then the Federal Government becomes the source for those resources. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the Federal agency that coordinates the activation and implementation of the National Response Framework (NRF), so the States work with FEMA to access Federal programs and support.



Damage to the Frederiksted pier.

FEMA News Photo

### Federal response includes...

1. Conducting Joint PDAs with State and local governments to identify:
  - Damage to individuals, farms, and businesses
  - Damage to public agencies, special districts, and private nonprofit organizations
  - Potential mitigation activities that can occur during repairs and before another disaster
2. Approving or denying requests for Federal assistance. If approved:
  - Assigns a Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) to head the Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT)
  - Sets up a Joint Field Office (JFO) to coordinate response and recovery efforts
  - Works with the State Coordinating Officer (SCO) to address response and recovery efforts
3. Activating the procedures outlined in the NRF (the NRF determines how the resources of Federal agencies and the American Red Cross will coordinate their efforts to provide immediate response assistance)
4. Establishing an Emergency Support Team (EST) to monitor operations from Washington
5. Identifying the necessary Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) to respond

# Outline of State Emergency Response and Recovery Activities

When a State responds to a disaster, it commonly does so in four action phases:

1. Threat or Impact
2. Initial Assessment
3. Response
4. Recovery

Each phase is addressed in detail in the State's own Emergency Management Plan (EMP). Certain key activities should occur, and they are included here as a checklist you can use when a disaster occurs in your State.



Los Alamos, New Mexico—FEMA Special Assistant David Fukutomi , Los Alamos Fire Dept. Robbie Stibbard, and State Coordinating Officer Bill Ewing on preliminary damage assessment of fire damage.

Photo by Andrea Booher/**FEMA News Photo**

## Phase 1: Threat or Impact

A DISASTER IS THREATENING AREAS OF YOUR STATE,  
OR A SUDDEN-IMPACT EVENT HAS OCCURRED.

- Inform the Governor.
- Activate the EMP (elements as needed) and the EOC.
- Assess the need for immediate lifesaving measures, such as:
  - Evacuations
  - Shelter
  - Urban search and rescue
- Establish liaisons with affected jurisdictions to initiate local damage assessments and receive briefings from local agencies on:
  - The current situation
  - Initial response activities
- Issue emergency or disaster proclamations by local officials or the Governor.
- Deploy State resources, including:
  - Requesting assistance from relief organizations
  - Activating mutual aid agreements as applicable
- Issue assurances to the public.
- Evaluate the need for Federal assistance and the consequences.
  - Identify specific needs and types of assistance that cannot be furnished by State and local resources.
  - Prepare to make future commitments when requesting outside assistance.
- Request a Presidential Disaster Declaration and Federal disaster assistance through the Office of the Governor.

## Phase 2: Initial Assessment

### THE MAGNITUDE OF THE DISASTER IS NOT KNOWN.

- Assess the magnitude of the disaster by identifying:
  - What needs to be done and when
  - How to protect people, the environment, and property from future damage
- Notify all appropriate parties, such as:
  - The Governor
  - Local governments
  - EOC staff
  - Response agencies
  - Support agencies
  - The public
  - The media
- Mobilize necessary resources.
- Activate the EOC and arrange for needed staff.

## Phase 3: Response

AS LOCAL JURISDICTIONS REPORT THEIR STATUS AND REQUEST ASSISTANCE, THE STATE COMMITS ITS RESOURCES TO RESPONSE.

- Activate a “Crisis Action Team” (CAT), or similar State team.
- Identify whether a smaller crisis management team (partial activation of the EOC) can manage the disaster or whether the situation warrants full activation of the EOC.
- Assess the situation by determining:
  - The jurisdictions that are involved
  - The potential that other jurisdictions will be impacted and when
  - Existing emergency conditions
  - Existing dangerous situations
  - Necessary life-support resources
  - The status of emergency responders and resources, such as:
    - What has been or is being committed
    - The types and locations of backup resources, personnel, and inventories
    - The availability of these responders and resources
- Identify tasks by determining:
  - What activities are currently underway
  - What activities need to be done now
  - What activities need to be done in the next 12 hours, 24 hours, 48 hours, etc.
- Activate Emergency Public Information procedures, such as:
  - Using the Emergency Alert System
  - Setting up a Joint Information Center.
- Initiate the assessment, documentation, and legal steps for declaring a state of emergency or disaster. The State will send a letter to initiate the collection of financial data. **This information should be included in the State Plan.**
- Issue a declaration from the Governor. Remember, a timely declaration acknowledges the severity of the situation and ensures that assistance will be prompt.
- Determine whether the situation warrants Federal assistance.
- Conduct Joint PDAs.
- Request Federal assistance.

## Phase 4: Recovery

THE IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO THE DISASTER IS OVER;  
SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY BEGINS.

- Determine the terms of assistance in the FEMA/State Agreement.
- Meet with the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO).
- Prepare for the Federal/State Meeting.
- Establish Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) locations, if used.
- Disseminate disaster information to the media and the public through the Joint Information Center.
- Coordinate outreach efforts with community relations staff.
- Begin infrastructure support by:
  - Establishing Public Assistance (PA) Applicant Briefings.
  - Coordinating receipt of Requests for Public Assistance (RPA).
  - Assisting local jurisdictions with Project Worksheets (PW).
- Conduct mitigation efforts by:
  - Establishing the Interagency Mitigation Team.
  - Completing the Mitigation Report.
  - Beginning the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program.
- Produce the State Hazard Mitigation Plan.

# Key Steps in the Recovery Process

The recovery process is a complex phase of the overall disaster response process. To aid your understanding, review the steps in this checklist.



Camilla, Georgia -- Houses are being rebuilt and repaired here as residents recover from devastating tornadoes that struck on February 14th.

Marvin Davis/FEMA News Photo

## Step 1: The Governor requests Federal assistance.

If the President denies Federal assistance, the cost of recovery is the responsibility of the State and local governments.

If the President declares an Emergency or Major Disaster Declaration, all of the provisions or applicable sections of Public Law 93-288 (as amended by Public Law 100-707), the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988, apply.

## Step 2: The State Emergency Management Agency and FEMA establish the JFO.

The President assigns an FCO to manage Federal activities.

The Governor assigns a SCO and a Governor's Authorized Representative (GAR) to work in partnership with Federal officials and represent the State's interest.

## Step 3: FEMA, the State, and local governments determine whether DRCs are needed for individuals to visit to gather information.

**Step 4: FEMA and the State coordinate with local emergency management groups to conduct PA Applicants' Briefings.**

The PA Applicants' Briefings are for the officials of cities, counties, special districts, public agencies, and private nonprofit organizations.

The briefings explain the types of Public Assistance available, application procedures, program eligibility, and deadlines.

**Step 5: Prospective applicants fill out an RPA.**

The Request for Public Assistance (RPA) form tells the type of damage the applicant incurred.

Based on this information, joint Federal, State, and local teams will be developed to conduct Damage Survey Reports (DSRs).

**Step 6: Prospective applicants appoint an "Applicant's Agent" and submit a "Designation of Applicant's Local Agent."**

The applicant's agent is the Point of Contact (POC) and is the only official who can make requests for funds on behalf of the applicant.

The applicant assigns a person to work with the team who is knowledgeable about:

- The damage sites
- How the work will be completed, either by the applicant or through an outside contract

**Step 7: Detailed PWs are written by the teams.**

The Project Worksheet (PW) becomes the basis for a project application.

**Step 8: FEMA and the State work with the applicant on hazard mitigation and insurance requirements.**

**Step 9: FEMA and the State approve or disapprove project applications.**

If approved:

- Relevant State requirements are applied and forwarded to the applicant.
- Deadlines are established.

If time extensions or project modifications are required, the applicant must notify the State for possible approval.

Extensions are usually granted for situations beyond the control of the applicant. Extensions are not usually granted for administrative delays.

**Step 10: Each quarter the applicant will submit a status report to the State for large projects that are not yet finished.**

**Step 11: When a project is complete, within 30 days of completion, the applicant must submit a “Summary of Documentation” for the Project Worksheet.**

The State will assign engineers to conduct final inspections, when necessary.

**Step 12: The State will work with the applicant for final payment and closeout.**

Audits are conducted in compliance with the Single Audit Act.

If the applicant disagrees with the findings or approvals, the applicant can appeal within 30 days.

# Unit 3 Learning Check



1. List a disaster response role unique to the local government.
2. What actions must be taken at the State government level before Federal resources are available for the disaster response?
3. If Federal aid is requested, what are the first two responsibilities of the Federal Government?
4. List the common action phases of disaster response at the State government level. List two actions for each phase.
5. List five steps in the disaster recovery process, and indicate where each occurs in the process (Step number).

Please see Appendix A, pages A.4–A.6, to check your answers.