

Welcome to the Community Points of Distribution instructional overview. The Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers designed this overview for you, the local emergency manager. Along with the accompanying text, this presentation will help you plan, operate, and close your local distribution center.

To begin, what is a Point of Distribution? A Point of Distribution or POD is where the public goes to pick up emergency supplies following a disaster. The need for a POD is based on lack of infrastructure to support normal distribution of food, water, or other supplies.

You, the Local Emergency Management Agency, or LEMA, determines the need for a POD, the staffing of the POD, the location of the POD, and the commodities to be distributed there.

A POD should accommodate vehicle, pedestrian, mass transit traffic, or a combination of all three.

As you can see, a POD operation is complex.

There are several things you can do *before* the disaster to avoid scenes like this and establish a smooth-running POD like this one.

Foremost in planning is to identify potential locations. Select sites based on population density. Look at traffic patterns. Ask yourself if people will have to cross a busy street to get supplies. Will this POD location cause a traffic jam? Are there frequent or sharp turns? Can large semi-trucks get in and out of this location?

Another step in planning is designing your POD layout. The first question to ask is “How large a POD do I need?” Then, “How will supplies will be distributed?” “How much should each person get?” A general quantity rule is each person or personal vehicle receives enough for a household of three.

Have you decided where the entrance and exit will be on site? Again, look at the traffic pattern. What’s the best location? Will emergency response vehicles have easy access?

Well in advance, project your equipment and personnel requirements.

Staffing is as important to success as finding the right location. Prepare to manage volunteers you never expected to appear.

Also, don’t forget a media point of contact. Publicity can make or break your POD operation.

Yes, there is a lot to think about. Your success is measured by meeting the public's needs. That's why we emphasize the importance of planning. With a developed strategy and coordinated effort your community will get those lifesaving commodities quickly and efficiently.

Now that you are prepared, the decision to activate a POD is yours. Take into account public need, infrastructure capability, and resources before announcing a POD location to the public. The disaster may have created limitations in communications, equipment, transportation, or personnel. Residents are dealing with enough difficulties. Be careful not to add false hope to the list.

When you make the decision to activate, assemble a team. A POD team consists of a Manager, a Loading team, and a Support team. The manager is responsible for everything at the POD; staffing and supply levels, supply chain flow, safety, and reporting.

Under the direction of the manager, the Loading team conducts loading operations. They keep the vehicles moving safely through the line.

The Support team resupplies, unloads bulk commodities, and sustains staff operations including rest areas and trash removal. A public information officer is part of the support team too. You will need one on site to talk to the media and provide information to residents.

Safety at the POD site is paramount! Inspect your work area daily, wear proper gear, and report injuries or incidents immediately.

Each LEMA has different issues to consider. You can see why planning ahead is vital to your POD operation and your community's recovery.

The United States Army Corps of Engineers has developed a typing standard for PODs which you may want to adopt.

Type III POD is the smallest. It is 150 by 300 feet. A staff of 19 supports three loading points and one vehicle lane. This POD can serve 5000 people per day.

Type II POD is 250 by 300 feet. A staff of 34 supports six loading points and two vehicle lanes. The POD serves 10,000 a day.

The largest, Type I is 250 by 500 feet. A staff of 78 supports 12 loading points and four vehicle lanes. Type I is only used in large metropolitan areas and serves 20,000 per day.

Here is an actual type III POD being set up.

PODs are generally open to the public for twelve hours a day. Recommended hours are 7am to 7pm.

Shutting down for re-supply from 7pm to 7am is a good practice. Staff numbers decrease. This gives your personnel and volunteers a break. This also reduces the amount of time the POD is open to the public in low light conditions. Now we're ready to open our POD.

A vehicle enters the POD through a 12-foot wide lane marked with traffic cones. The Traffic Controller stands at the front where everyone can see him or her and signals a vehicle to stop.

Once everyone stops, the Traffic Controller blows one long whistle blast and shouts "LOAD!"

"LOAD" is echoed by the loaders.

The Loaders load supplies into the car then step back and shout "CLEAR". The Traffic Controller visually verifies that everyone has cleared the line. Another long whistle blast, hand signal and the next one enters the line and the process repeats.

The POD manager monitors the burn rate to keep the supply chain flowing. The consumption rate is reported to LEMA each day. Once the disaster winds down, these inventory reports validate costs and are used to recoup costs.

When recovery has reached a point where the local community can sustain itself, the POD will close. Give advance notification of closing! Let LEMA, the property owner, and the public know 24-36 hours before you shut down operations.

Have a plan in place of where to send anyone who shows up after closing. Some people may still need help.

Make sure the site is completely clean when you leave. This maintains good will with the owners so you can use their site again should the need arise. This was an overview of the POD mission. It's now up to you, the local emergency manager, to plan, organize, and exercise as a team. Start today. Share your knowledge of the importance of the POD mission with your government and private sector partners. Your community is counting on you to be able to get life-saving resources to them.