



NEMA 2021 National Policy Priorities

Ensure Diversity and Inclusion in Emergency Management

Issue: The role of disaster response and recovery requires sensitivity to the needs of all disaster survivors and equitable and fair distribution of federal assistance to all those affected.

Recommendations:

- FEMA, with input from NEMA and other key stakeholders, should thoroughly review all current emergency management laws and policies through an equity lens, including identifying the intended and unintended effects of current policies on vulnerable individuals and at-risk communities.
 - Specifically focus on institutional inequities in hazard mitigation, individual assistance, and public assistance programs.
 - Specifically focus on at-risk communities in areas susceptible to future effects of climate change.
- FEMA should integrate equity and cultural competence into current FEMA doctrine, training and educational programs to influence sustainable changes throughout the Emergency Management Enterprise.
 - Work with state and local officials to identify ways in which the Threat Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) and State Preparedness Report (SPR) can be utilized to ensure equity and deploy grant funds accordingly.
- The makeup of personnel within emergency management agencies should look like the communities they serve. State and local emergency management must seek new ways to recruit and retain a diverse workforce.

Clarify the Role of Emergency Management

Issue: The response to COVID-19 highlighted many successes but also some weaknesses at all levels of emergency management. At the federal level FEMA wasn't utilized until well into the event. At the state and local level, emergency management's role in the COVID-19 response varied with some governors creating entirely new response structures rather than utilizing existing plans and systems. In many cases, this caused initial delays and confusion. The role of emergency management in all-hazards events, traditional and non-traditional, must be more clearly defined and formalized.

Recommendations:

- The Administration must clarify FEMA's role during incidents and disasters that require multiagency coordination. FEMA should be the lead coordinating agency for all multi agency incidents across all phases of the incident, to include recovery. This includes Stafford Act and non-Stafford Act events.

- The Administration should clearly define the roles of public health agencies and FEMA during public health emergencies. Clarify roles of FEMA and the myriad public health "EM" offices, which include HHS Assistant Secretary of Preparedness and Response; HHS CDC Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response; HHS FDA Office of Emergency Operations; and the National Security Council's CBRNE unit.
- The Administration should work with Congress to ensure FEMA's capacity to successfully achieve interagency coordination through adequate resourcing, staffing, and authorities.
- FEMA can support state and local emergency managers in maintaining open lines of communication with elected leaders to ensure response plans are adequately understood, communicated, and rehearsed. Lessons learned from the COVID-19 response should be included to ensure adherence to plans during future events.

Reduce the Complexity of the FEMA Public Assistance Program

Issue: Federal disaster recovery programs and processes are too complex, slow, bureaucratic, and in many cases can impede state and local governments' best efforts to improve outcomes for individuals and communities. Despite myriad attempts in recent years to streamline the Public Assistance Program, FEMA continues to struggle to achieve stated goals, incorporate the latest technology, and provide maximum flexibility to state and local officials.

Recommendations:

- Conduct a review of FEMA Headquarters versus FEMA Regional decision-making roles and authorities to aid in streamlining and fairness. While regions should have the flexibility in tailoring programs to the needs of individual states, all policy, guidance, and regulations should be applied fairly across the 10 FEMA regions.
- Despite the robust increase in management costs provided for disaster programs through the Disaster Recovery Reform Act (DRRA), one remaining shortcoming is the inability for grantees to utilize this allowance across all open disasters. As FEMA continues evolving this new management cost policy, they should allow grantees to utilize management costs across all open disasters which will help to enhance recovery and mitigation capacity; incentivize disaster close-out; and drive down the costs of disasters.
- Incorporate enhanced use of technology for Preliminary Damage Assessments (PDAs). Integrate lessons learned from COVID-19 response to adopt operational remote PDAs as accepted practice.
- Review applicability of Emergency Protective Measures in all hazards to ensure the program guidance is appropriate to all hazards, including but not limited to wildfires, civil unrest, and public health emergencies.
- NEMA will work with partner stakeholders to assess administrative bottlenecks creating funding delays in the Public Assistance Program and provide recommendations for resolution.

Build State Capacity

Issue: A fundamental requirement of creating a strong and interconnected emergency management system nationwide is to build recovery and mitigation capacity. This can range from developing plans to coordinating effective mutual aid and assets necessary to manage the consequences of myriad potential hazards. FEMA continues to encourage states and locals to manage "less than

catastrophic” disaster declarations thereby reducing the Federal burden of disaster costs nationally. NEMA does not support disaster cost-shifting to state and local governments. We do support efforts to right-size emergency management organizations to appropriately handle current and future threats. One of the keys to ensuring effective preparedness, response, recovery, mitigation, and administrative requirements is ample and skills-based capacity at the state and local levels.

Recommendations:

- FEMA should work with NEMA to develop a resource requirements study/workforce assessment to understand what is necessary at the local and state level for emergency management capacity. NEMA conducted a similar study, funded by FEMA, in 1992-1993. Given the breadth of changes in the emergency management profession since that time, an update is warranted. Determining capacity requirements would include an assessment of the increased complexity of disasters, current and future risk, the growing role of emergency management in non-traditional events (active-shooter, cyber, public health emergencies, etc.), economic factors, and how all these issues impact a jurisdiction’s disaster resilience or vulnerability, and thus their level of requirements for emergency management capacity. NEMA will develop resources with stakeholders to help state emergency management directors effectively inform their governors and legislatures on resources needed, and how to advocate for funding if necessary.
- As the Building Resilience Infrastructure in Communities (BRIC) program continues to evolve, states should look for opportunities to harness the full capabilities of this program and utilize best practices documents such as FEMA’s Mitigation Action Portfolio (MAP).
- FEMA regularly acknowledges the cost-benefit of the Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPG) yet is routinely unable to avoid drastic reductions in funding each year the President’s Budget is submitted to Congress. EMPG is the primary method by which states build capacity and demonstrate buy-in with a 50-50 match. FEMA should develop new ways in which they advocate for this program within the Administration.
- FEMA should avoid widespread changes to preparedness grant programs without robust coordination with grantees first. Constantly changing national priorities for grant programs makes it difficult, if not impossible, for states and locals to achieve long term goals.