



HUD Disaster Operations: Frequently Asked Questions

(1) What Departmental guidance and protocols define HUD disaster operations including roles and responsibilities of each office?

The HUD Operating Protocols include a section on disaster preparedness, response and recovery efforts in the field. Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plans for HQ and each field office further ensure that the Department is able to operate even if there are impacts to HUD offices. Some program offices also have procedures for engaging with grantees and reporting on their status following disasters (e.g., Chapter 38 to HUD Handbook 4350.1 Multifamily Asset Management and Project Servicing). Taken together these documents provide an overall framework for Departmental disaster operations.

(2) Does HUD have disaster authorities?

Yes. Most HUD programs have responsibilities to ensure they can withstand and respond to the effects of emergencies. HUD authority to establish and execute preparedness, response, and recovery activities exists under a number of statutes, White House and Department of Homeland Security guidance, and related interagency frameworks. These include but are not limited to: the Stafford Act, Presidential Policy Directive 8, National Response Framework (NRF), National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF), existing HUD statutory authorities, and supplemental appropriations (e.g., CDBG-DR). In addition, HUD programs often provide increased flexibility within statutory authorities and program requirements to assist grantees following a disaster.

(3) What are HUD's mission areas under these authorities?

HUD's disaster mission includes: response, recovery and mitigation. In response to a disaster, HUD ascertains the safety and security of staff, assesses impacts to offices, establishes communications with program grantees, assists providers with return to normal operations, and supports Federal inter-agency response efforts under the NRF. Over the longer term, HUD supports community recovery using existing or expanded programs (e.g., CDBG-DR) and leads the Housing Recovery Support Function (RSF) under the NDRF. As part of mitigation efforts, HUD promotes community resiliency, builds inter-agency partnerships, and participates in preparedness exercises. Effective program management requires the ability to withstand and respond to disaster impacts. The continuation of existing HUD programs is implicit in our disaster response.

(4) What is the Stafford Act?

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5206 (Stafford Act), as amended, defines certain Federal response and recovery assistance available after major disasters, and sets the conditions for obtaining that assistance. The law established the process by which States and Tribes may request and obtain a Presidential Disaster Declaration (PDD). To receive a declaration requires both the county and state to experience damages that exceed stated per capita thresholds. If a PDD is issued, FEMA is tasked with coordinating the Federal response. This entails the appointment of a Federal Coordinating Officer and a Joint Field Office (JFO), from which Federal response and recovery operations are coordinated. FEMA has authority to issue Mission Assignments (MA) to partner Federal agencies as part of the response and recovery coordination effort. Note that the Stafford Act operates in addition to HUD's existing authorities.

(5) What is a Mission Assignment from FEMA?

Mission Assignments (MA) are taskings from FEMA to perform specific work in support of the disaster response and recovery effort. Mission Assignments can be used to pay employee travel and overtime, hire



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contractors, or purchase supplies. MAs are typically issued to HUD under the NRF to staff FEMA JFOs and Disaster Recovery Centers (DRC), and under the NDRF to coordinate the Housing RSF on-site at FEMA JFOs and from HUD Field Offices. MAs do not replace HUD's existing responsibilities and HUD could have staff working in a disaster area under HUD authorities as well as a MA from FEMA.

(6) What are HUD's priorities after a disaster?

After a disaster, HUD's first priority is the safety of staff, communications with grantees, and continuity of operations including assessing the condition of our offices. The second priority is program office disaster response efforts including assessment of damages to housing units, status of operations across programs, and the issuance of program changes or guidance to support grantee recovery. HUD's third priority is supporting inter-agency response efforts under the NRF and coordination of the Housing RSF under the NDRF if activated through MAs from FEMA. In the event that Congress appropriates Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) funding, assisting the communities with the planning and execution of the CDBG-DR grant is an important but later priority. Most communities do not receive CDBG-DR grant funding following a disaster.

(7) Does HUD have an incident command structure for disaster operations?

Yes. The Disaster Management Group (DMG) at HUD HQ is chaired by the Deputy Secretary and is responsible for inter-office coordination across disaster preparedness, response and recovery activities. The DMG is a standing working group composed of leadership from across HUD offices that may be convened as needed in advance of or in response to a disaster. In the field, Office of Field Policy and Management (FPM) Regional Administrators, Deputy Regional Administrators, and Field Office Directors coordinate inter-agency preparedness, response and recovery operations for their region and field office under the umbrella of the DMG in accordance with the HUD Operating Protocols.

(8) What role does FPM play in the field?

FPM coordinates field preparedness and implementation of the NRF, NDRF, Mitigation Framework and other Presidential directives across Regions and Field Office jurisdictions under the leadership of Regional Administrators and Field Office Directors. Field Office Directors develop partnerships in each state across Federal inter-agency frameworks. FPM HQ, Regional leadership, and Field Office Directors work in close collaboration with program and support offices to deploy staff and coordinate disaster operations in the field under FEMA MAs, other interagency efforts, and HUD internal efforts. FPM HQ also assigns senior FPM staff to lead preparedness and disaster response and recovery operations in the field, including: one or more Disaster Recovery Coordinators and Field Office Directors as Housing RSF Field Coordinators in each state. Field leadership also maintain regional disaster rosters and teams composed of staff from across HUD programs and offices to deploy to impacted areas under MAs from FEMA for response and recovery operations.

(9) What are the types of actions performed by program and support offices as part of HUD's disaster operations?

Program and support office actions across HUD's disaster operations include: policy guidance, training, and technical assistance; applicable program offerings and post-disaster flexibilities; post-disaster reporting, assessments, analysis and planning; and operational support and staffing for MA deployments. Actions range from those specific to program implementation to requests for HUD assistance from Federal, state, and local partners.



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(10) What are the disaster preparedness tasks of the DMG?

The DMG is a standing working group that meets to coordinate disaster preparedness. The DMG's primary preparedness tasks include: (1) monitor and report impacts across HUD interests, (2) disseminate current information on HUD mitigation, response and recovery authorities, policies, and resources, (3) build partnerships and coordinate across inter-agency frameworks including data sharing agreements with other Federal Departments, (4) identify disaster volunteer cadres for deployment under FEMA MAs, (5) maintain administrative processes and controls for staff deployments, costs, reimbursements and equipment, and (6) coordinate participation in Departmental and inter-agency preparedness exercises.

(11) What are the triggers for DMG activation in response to a disaster?

In advance of (e.g., hurricane) or following a disaster, HUD exposure will be evaluated by leadership, and if needed, the Deputy Secretary convenes the DMG within 24 hours, with the frequency of subsequent meetings and activities determined by the circumstances of the disaster. Typically, the DMG is convened when housing impacts to HUD inventory are significant or there are widespread impacts across multiple housing markets that are likely to result in extensive and long-term unmet needs.

(12) What is HUD's process for reporting impacts to staff, offices, grantees and clients after a disaster?

FPM staff in the field submit reports throughout the year for significant events, emergencies and disasters that have immediate or long-term impacts to HUD operations, HUD funded entities, and HUD sectors in their jurisdictions. Regional and field office leadership determines when to submit the reports based on local situations, unless otherwise requested by HQ leadership. Reports are provided to HQ leadership and the HUD Emergency Operations Center (HEOC) for distribution. However, when the DMG is convened after a disaster reporting is expanded to produce a Departmental Disaster Situation Report which is coordinated by the HEOC. As part of this effort, all program and support offices begin submitting reports to the HEOC within 24 hours of DMG activation on impacts to staff, offices, grantees, units and clients.

(13) What are the critical tasks for HUD during the first two weeks after a disaster?

Within the first 24-48 hours after a disaster HUD must account for staff, determine operating status of offices, resume operations or implement continuity plans, and establish communications with HUD grantees in the impacted communities. The process of assessing damages across HUD grantees and units also starts within the first 24 hours with a goal of completing assessments within the first week. If there are HUD clients displaced, the goal is to re-house them within two to four weeks of the disaster, either in a HUD supported unit or temporary housing assistance (e.g., family/friends or FEMA funded hotel/rental assistance). Concurrent to these efforts, programmatic and technical support is provided to help return grantees to normal operations and address post-disaster operational challenges. Later in this initial period, HUD may also be called on to work with local governments to begin planning for long-term recovery of housing or other community missions.

(14) What HUD resources and flexibilities are available after a disaster?

After a disaster HUD provides available research and reports on impacted communities, shares information on existing authorities, and provides information on available resources to Federal partners, HUD grantees, impacted states and communities. In terms of specific programs, HUD offices may do the following depending on the circumstances of the disaster and available appropriations:



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- PIH and HSG provide information and assistance across HUD assisted housing resources, including damage reports and available vacancies. This information is shared with FEMA through the DMG.
- HSG and Ginnie Mae provide information and assistance across HUD mortgage and single family housing resources, including post-disaster moratoriums on foreclosures, mortgage insurance programs, and Real Estate Owned (REO) homes that are ready for purchase. Housing Counseling agencies are also available to assist homeowners after a disaster.
- CPD and PIH provide information and assistance across HUD community development and homeless assistance programs, including re-allocation of funding for disaster recovery under CDBG and Indian CDBG. If appropriated, CDBG-DR may also be available over the longer-term, typically months after the disaster.
- FHEO provides information on fair housing and ensures equal access to housing across disaster impacted housing markets.
- OLHCHH provides information on healthy homes, especially housing related environmental issues important after a disaster (e.g., mold remediation).
- PD&R provides information and consulting on housing repairs, construction and mitigation strategies.

(15) How does HUD coordinate with FEMA and other Federal inter-agency partners after a disaster?

Coordination with FEMA occurs at both the Headquarters and field levels after a disaster. Efforts typically involve information sharing on damaged HUD assisted units and related displacement, vacancies across the HUD portfolio that may be available for housing disaster survivors, HUD resource needs (e.g., generators, temporary rental assistance for displaced HUD clients), HUD authorities and funding available for recovery, and Mission Assignments from FEMA. The Office of Disaster Management and National Security (ODMNS) in the Office of Administration (OA) coordinates with FEMA and other Federal inter-agency partners at the Departmental level for HUD HQ including FEMA's National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) and the Recovery Support Function Leadership Group (RSFLG). In the field, FPM Disaster Recovery Coordinators, Regional Disaster Liaisons, and Field Office Directors (FOD) coordinate with FEMA, other Federal partners, and state and local disaster response agencies, including FEMA Regional Response Coordination Centers (RRCCs) and FEMA Joint Field Offices (JFO). If FEMA issues a Mission Assignment to HUD, ODMNS / OA and FPM collaborate to negotiate a scope of work and budget with FEMA. The MA is executed by ODMNS / OA at HQ and implemented by FPM in the impacted state.

(16) What is the National Response Framework (NRF)?

The NRF defines roles, responsibilities, and coordination across Federal, state, and local partners on response activities immediately after a disaster through 15 Emergency Support Functions (ESF). The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) coordinates all Federal efforts under the NRF. HUD is a support agency under ESF#6 – Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services. HUD is also a support agency under ESF#5 – Emergency Management and ESF#15 – Public Affairs. However, ESF-6 is the most common way that HUD is engaged in response activities. This may include deployment of HUD staff to impacted areas if a Mission Assignment is issued to HUD by FEMA.

(17) What is the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF)?



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The National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF) defines how Federal agencies will more effectively organize and operate to utilize existing resources to promote effective recovery and support States, Tribes and other jurisdictions affected by a disaster. The following Recovery Support Functions (RSFs) comprise the NDRF's coordinating structure for key functional areas of assistance: Community Planning and Capacity Building (led by FEMA), Economic (led by DOC), Health and Social Services (led by HHS), Housing (led by HUD), Infrastructure (led by USACE), and Natural and Cultural Resources (led by DOI). The purpose of the RSFs is to support local governments by facilitating problem solving, improving access to resources and by fostering coordination among State and Federal agencies, nongovernmental partners and stakeholders. HUD is the coordinating agency for the Housing RSF and leads preparedness and recovery operations with primary agencies (Department of Homeland Security / FEMA, Department of Justice, and Department of Agriculture) and supporting organizations (Corporation for National and Community Service, Department of Commerce, Department of Energy, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Health and Human Services, Small Business Administration, U.S. Access Board, Department of Veterans Affairs, American Red Cross and National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters). This may also include deployment of staff to FEMA JFOs in disaster impacted areas under a Mission Assignment (MA) from FEMA.

(18) When does HUD typically get a MA from FEMA?

FEMA authority to issue Mission Assignments is restricted to Presidentially Declared Disasters (PDD) where the Stafford Act is in effect. If the PDD only authorizes FEMA Public Assistance (PA), it is unlikely that HUD would be issued a Mission Assignment (no MA has ever been issued to HUD under a PA only PDD). However, if there are extensive impacts to rental housing markets and FEMA Individual Assistance (cash payments to individuals including rental assistance) is authorized HUD activation is possible under a FEMA issued MA to support Emergency Support Function #6 (mass care / housing) and/or to coordinate the Housing Recovery Support Function (RSF). MAs are typically issued after FEMA establishes a Joint Field Office (JFO) in the impacted state and within two weeks from the disaster. Depending on the circumstances of the disaster, Housing RSF MAs are sometimes issued a month or more after the PDD.

(19) What are HUD's roles and responsibilities under a MA for ESF#6 (Mass Care) of the NRF?

Since 2010, HUD was issued 27 MAs to provide support at FEMA Joint Field Offices (JFOs) and Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs) under the NRF. As part of these efforts 100s of HUD staff were deployed to disaster impacted areas. Staff coordinated available HUD resources with inter-agency partners at the FEMA JFO and connected disaster survivors (including HUD clients) to potential HUD resources at DRCs. These engagements lasted from between 2 weeks to several months.

(20) What does HUD do as the coordinating agency of the Housing RSF under the NDRF?

HUD Field Office Directors (FODs) in each HUD jurisdiction serve as the Field Coordinators for the Housing RSF and work across Federal partners on preparedness activities, post-disaster implementation of the NDRF under MAs from FEMA, and follow-on activities as long-term recovery efforts under the framework transition to normal operations across the Federal partners. Since 2010, HUD was issued 15 MAs to lead the Housing RSF after a disaster. HUD typically deploys staff to the FEMA JFO to work with FEMA recovery staff in addition to the role of the FOD as Field Coordinator for these efforts. The main task of staff is to work closely with HUD PD&R and Federal/state/local partners to complete a Mission Scoping Assessment (MSA) and a Recovery Support Strategy (RSS) that FEMA submits to the



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state to support their recovery priorities. These documents identify existing funding and authorities that could assist the state in recovery activities, and what technical assistance the Federal government will provide related to these resources. Work under Housing RSF MAs can last from several months to over a year for larger disasters.

(21) How and when are Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG) funds typically appropriated?

HUD provides flexible grants to help cities, counties, and States recover from Presidentially declared disasters, especially in low-income areas, subject to availability of supplemental appropriations.

In response to presidentially declared disasters, Congress may appropriate additional funding for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program as Disaster Recovery grants to rebuild the affected areas and provide crucial seed money to start the recovery process. Since CDBG Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) assistance may fund a broad range of recovery activities, HUD can help communities and neighborhoods that otherwise might not recover due to limited resources. Disaster Recovery grants often supplement disaster programs of FEMA, the Small Business Administration, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In addition, HOME Disaster Recovery grants can provide an important resource for providing affordable housing to disaster victims.

CDBG-DR funds are made available to states, units of general local governments, Indian tribes, and insular areas designated by the President of the United States as disaster areas. These communities must have significant unmet recovery needs and the capacity to carry out a disaster recovery program (usually these are governments that already receive HOME or CDBG allocations). At times, supplemental appropriations restrict funding solely to states rather than the local cities and/or counties.

(22) What are CDBG-DR funds typically used to address and how are these funds different from regular CDBG appropriations?

Grantees may use CDBG-DR funds for recovery efforts involving housing, economic development, infrastructure and prevention of further damage to affected areas. Use of CDBG-DR funding cannot duplicate funding available from FEMA, the Small Business Administration, and the US Army Corps of Engineers. A duplication occurs when a beneficiary receives assistance from multiple sources for a cumulative amount that exceeds the total need for a particular recovery purpose.

Examples of these activities include:

- Buying damaged properties in a flood plain and relocating residents to safer areas;
- Relocation payments for people and businesses displaced by the disaster;
- Debris removal not covered by FEMA;
- Rehabilitation of homes and buildings damaged by the disaster;
- Buying, constructing, or rehabilitating public facilities such as streets, neighborhood centers, and water, sewer and drainage systems;
- Code enforcement;
- Homeownership activities such as down payment assistance, interest rate subsidies and loan guarantees for disaster victims;
- Public services;
- Helping businesses retain or create jobs in disaster impacted areas; and



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- Planning and administration costs (limited to no more than 20 percent of the grant).

(23) What are Emergency Support Functions?

Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) is the grouping of governmental and certain private sector capabilities into an organizational structure to provide support, resources, program implementation, and services that are most likely needed to save lives, protect property and the environment, restore essential services and critical infrastructure, and help victims and communities return to normal following domestic incidents.

Emergency Support Functions

- ESF1 Transportation
- ESF2 Communications
- ESF3 Public Works and Engineering
- ESF4 Firefighting
- ESF5 Emergency Management
- ESF6 Mass Care, Housing, and Human Services
- ESF7 Resources Support
- ESF8 Public Health and Medical Services
- ESF9 Urban Search and Rescue
- ESF10 Oil and Hazardous Materials Response
- ESF11 Agriculture and Natural Resources
- ESF12 Energy
- ESF13 Public Safety and Security
- ESF14 Long-term Community Recovery and Mitigation
- ESF15 External Affairs