

Lesson Overview

This lesson describes the events that take place before and after a disaster declaration, and explains when potential environmental/historic preservation compliance issues should be considered.

Lesson Objectives

At the completion of this lesson, you will be able to describe the role of environmental/historic preservation compliance in a disaster operation.

Disaster Operations Overview**Key Points**

- Disaster operations normally begin with a Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA).
 - After a disaster declaration is made, FEMA opens the Disaster Field Office (DFO).
 - FEMA's Individual Assistance (IA), Public Assistance (PA), and hazard mitigation programs provide funding for disaster planning, response, recovery, and mitigation activities.
 - At each point in the disaster operations process, environmental/historic preservation concerns may be addressed.
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Environmental/Historic Preservation Review & Disaster Operations

FEMA environmental/historic preservation review:

- Is the process of evaluating proposed FEMA-funded projects and activities to ensure that they are in compliance with Federal environmental/historic preservation laws and Executive orders.
 - Integrates environmental/historic preservation considerations into disaster planning, response, recovery, and mitigation.
 - Should be incorporated into all of FEMA's programs and activities, rather than treated as a separate process.
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Pre-Disaster Planning

To effectively address environmental/historic preservation issues, pre-disaster planning is essential. This planning includes:

- Establishing interagency contacts to facilitate coordination among agencies and organizations.
 - Identifying major environmental/historic preservation concerns in the FEMA region, such as the location of historic properties or endangered species habitat.
 - Educating communities on the benefits of preparedness and mitigation measures to protect environmental/historic resources.
 - Participating in training (such as this course) on environmental/historic preservation considerations in disaster operations.
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Preliminary Disaster Assessment

In the wake of a disaster, a Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA) is conducted by local, State, Tribal, Federal, and volunteer organizations to help determine losses and response and recovery needs.

Even at this early stage, environmental and historic preservation concerns may be identified. Therefore, an environmental specialist may participate in the PDA process.

For example, a notation should be made if:

- Any damaged buildings appear to be in a historic district or may potentially be historic.
 - Any emergency activities or damaged structures are near bodies of water.
 - Debris removal activities have the potential to affect air or water quality.
 - Hazardous materials are present.
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Disaster Declaration

The Governor may request a disaster declaration if the disaster impact exceeds Tribal, State, or local capability to respond and recover from the disaster.

FEMA evaluates the request and recommends action to the President based on the severity of the disaster, and the Tribe, State, or local community's ability to respond and recover.

The President then approves or denies the request. This decision process could take hours, days, or weeks depending on the nature of the disaster.

Disaster Declaration and FEMA Assistance

Once the President makes a disaster declaration in a state, designated counties become eligible for certain types of disaster assistance from FEMA.

Typically, the State Emergency Management Agency is the grantee of FEMA funding. Local governments and eligible private non-profit organizations are the applicants for FEMA assistance, also known as the sub-grantees. Depending on the program and state law, Federally recognized tribes may serve as the grantee and/or subgrantee.

Disaster Field Office (DFO)

Once the President has issued a disaster declaration, FEMA establishes a DFO to assist in the response and recovery effort. The DFO is managed by the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO), who is designated by the President.

FEMA's activities require successful coordination with Federal and State agencies, such as the Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), and State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA).

Scoping Process

The scoping process develops a strategy to:

- Address environmental/historic preservation issues.
- Coordinate an exchange of information.
- Identify key players.

The scoping process begins when FEMA's Regional Environmental Officer (REO), operating under the title of Environmental Liaison Officer (ELO) at the DFO, contacts Federal, Tribal, and State resource agencies to:

- Notify them of a pending or declared disaster, and
 - Begin to collect information about resources and requirements specific to the disaster area.
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Scoping Meeting

The ELO then holds a meeting to determine how environmental/historic preservation review will be conducted for the disaster. This meeting takes place early in the disaster operation.

While attendance at the scoping meeting varies, it generally includes representatives from any agency or organization who may be involved in resolving environmental/historic preservation issues for the disaster.

Typical attendees include:

- FEMA environmental/historic preservation staff.
 - FEMA and State program officers and staff.
 - Federal and State resource agencies
 - Tribal government, if a grantee.
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Scoping Meeting Objectives

In the meeting, the ELO should facilitate a discussion of the following:

- **Contacts:** The key players.
 - **Consultation Process:** The process to be followed and ways to expedite the process.
 - **Issues:** Planned response and recovery activities, such as debris removal or temporary housing, that will likely have environmental/historic preservation issues.
 - **Resources:** Known natural and historic resources identified by resource agencies.
 - **Emergency Situations:** Process for resolving compliance for emergency situations.
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Scoping Meeting Outcomes

Scoping meeting attendees should:

- Provide input on the draft of disaster-specific environmental/historic preservation guidance (sometimes known as the "Green Book"). Once finalized, this document will be used to inform FEMA program staff and applicants of potential issues and contacts.
 - Develop a plan for public involvement, as public participation is required for the resolution of many environmental/historic preservation issues.
 - Identify potential issues and schedule followup meetings to develop or review compliance protocols.
 - Identify existing agreements and steps necessary to develop, revise, and finalize needed agreements.
 - Provide input for the development of written guidance and briefings for program staff and managers (e.g., the Public Assistance field personnel briefing).
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Lesson Summary

You have now completed the second lesson in the Disaster Operations and FEMA Programs section of this course. You should be able to describe the environmental and historic actions that occur before and after a disaster declaration.
