

## The National Response Plan

In December 2004, under a Presidential Directive, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security developed a comprehensive, all-hazards approach to enhance the ability of the United States to manage domestic incidents. This approach, known as the National Response Plan (NRP), incorporates best practices and procedures from various incident management disciplines and integrates them into a unified structure. The NRP forms the basis of how the Federal Government coordinates with State, Tribal, and local governments and the private sector during incidents.

Under the NRP, resources are grouped into Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) that would most likely be needed during a domestic incident. ESF #11 specifically addresses the protection of agriculture and natural resources and is coordinated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). ESF #11 is divided into four primary functions:

**1. Provision of nutrition assistance**—Includes determining nutrition assistance needs, obtaining appropriate food supplies, arranging for delivery of supplies, and authorizing disaster food stamps. This function is coordinated by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

**2. Animal and plant disease and pest response**—Includes implementing an integrated Federal, State, Tribal, and local response to an outbreak of a highly contagious or economically devastating zoonotic (animal) disease, an outbreak of a highly infective exotic plant disease, or an economically devastating plant pest infestation. Ensures that animal, veterinary, and wildlife issues in natural disasters are supported in coordination with the emergency support function that covers public health and medical services. This function is coordinated by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

**3. Assurance of the safety and security of the commercial food supply**—Includes the inspection and verification of food safety aspects of slaughter and processing plants, products in distribution and retail sites, and import facilities at ports of entry; laboratory analysis of food samples; control of products suspected to be adulterated; plant closures;

foodborne disease surveillance; and field investigations. This function is coordinated by USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).

**4. Protection of natural, cultural, and historic (NCH) properties**—Includes appropriate response actions to conserve, rehabilitate, recover, and restore NCH resources. This function is coordinated by the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Environmental Policy and Compliance.

### APHIS' Leading Role in ESF #11

As a part of ESF #11, APHIS will coordinate any response efforts for incidents involving an animal disease, plant disease, or plant pest. APHIS will be responsible in these instances for coordinating State, Tribal, and local authorities and other Federal agencies to conduct disease and/or pest control and eradication activities. Unlike the previous program, the Federal Response Plan, the NRP allows APHIS to utilize the Federal unified emergency management structure to respond to agricultural emergencies, such as animal and plant disease.

This role is consistent with APHIS' traditional mission of safeguarding the health of U.S. animal and plant agricultural resources. APHIS has led response efforts for several, high-profile animal and plant emergencies in recent years. For example, Asian longhorned beetle (ALB), a destructive wood-boring insect that attacks hardwood trees, was discovered in New York City in 1996 and Chicago in 1998. APHIS and State and local governments have managed response and eradication efforts costing more than \$59 million.

Another example involves California's recent outbreak of exotic Newcastle disease (END). END—one of the most infectious poultry diseases in the world—was spread to California through birds illegally smuggled into the United States. APHIS led efforts to eradicate the disease and was ultimately successful in this endeavor. The cost of the response effort reached nearly \$200 million.

In the future when animal and plant emergencies occur, APHIS will direct its response efforts from headquarters through the following ESF protocols:

- APHIS will provide headquarters-level direction and organize the ESF staff.
- The APHIS national response coordinator will convene a conference call with the appropriate support agencies and non-Federal partners to assess the situation and determine appropriate actions.

- APHIS will alert supporting organizations and request that they provide representation.
- For regional operations, APHIS will work with the State's principal point of contact to coordinate Federal–State response efforts.
  - For animal/zoonotic response, the State contact may be the State Veterinarian or other official from either the animal health or emergency management community. The Federal representative will be the Area Veterinarian-in-Charge.
  - For an exotic plant disease or plant pest response, the State contact will be the State's top plant health regulatory official. The Federal representative will be the APHIS State Plant Health Director.
- States will activate their statewide, regional, or local emergency operations centers, as needed, to serve as the base of operations for interfacing with local governments, State agencies, and the private sector.
- The State and Federal representatives will establish a Joint Operations Center, which serves as the focal point for coordinating the disease or pest management and decisionmaking.
- Regardless of the nature of the disease or pest emergency, the State will establish a Joint Information Center (JIC) that will function as the principal source of information about the incident response in the State. The State JIC will coordinate closely with the Federal officials to ensure consistency in the information released to the media and public.
- In assisting with the disease or pest response, the local or county government will activate its emergency operations centers to provide a local base of operations. In some States, a county emergency declaration may be needed to initiate county response activities.

### **APHIS' Supporting Role in ESF #11 and other ESF groups**

APHIS will also play a supporting role in ESF #11 incidents not directly related to animal and plant diseases or pests. APHIS may assist in the provision of nutrition assistance; assurance of the safety and security of the commercial food supply; and protection of natural, cultural, and historic properties.

APHIS may also play an important supporting role in response efforts involving other ESF groups. For example, APHIS provided personnel, vehicles, and GIS mapping equipment in support of the Federal response efforts during the repeated hurricane activity in Florida in 2004. The coordination for this type of emergency response is now covered by ESF #5.

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