



# EPA'S ROLE IN THE FEDERAL RESPONSE PLAN

## Being Prepared for Catastrophic Disaster

# FACTSHEET

### WHAT IS THE FEDERAL RESPONSE PLAN?

**D**isasters such as hurricanes, floods, earthquakes can strike a community at any time. Most often, local emergency responders can take effective action, sometimes with help from state agencies. But, a catastrophic disaster--when communities suffer injuries, deaths, and widespread property damage--may overwhelm the capabilities of state and local governments. At such times, states may request help from the federal government. The multi-agency disaster response program that helps states during and after a disaster is the Federal Response Plan (FRP).

### HOW DOES FRP WORK?

**T**he process for activating the FRP begins when the governor of a state or territory requests federal assistance from the President. Under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, the President may provide federal resources to the affected areas by declaring an emergency or major disaster. Once the President has declared an emergency or major disaster, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is responsible for activating and implementing the FRP. A Federal Coordinating Officer, appointed by the President, takes charge of the overall coordination of the federal response. This person

works with the State Coordinating Officer, appointed by the governor of the affected state, as well as with representatives of federal agencies. Together, they determine the needs of the state and provide for the delivery of appropriate resources. EPA, along with 25 other federal departments and agencies, plus the American Red Cross, are ready to provide assistance. When disaster threatens a community, these federal partners establish communications with state authorities, position emergency equipment and supplies, and help track the event. After a disaster declaration has been made, they help identify needs, direct response activities, and mobilize federal personnel, equipment, and other resources to supplement the state capabilities.

### FRP RESOURCES: EMERGENCY SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

**T**he Federal Response Plan groups federal assistance into 12 functional areas called Emergency Support Functions or ESFs, including fire fighting, transportation, health and medical services, public works, urban search and rescue, and others. (See inset.) Each ESF is headed by a primary agency, selected for its statutory authorities, resources, and capabilities in the particular functional area. Other agencies are designated as support agencies for one or more ESFs. EPA is the primary agency for ESF #10 Hazardous Materials and also supports ESFs 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, and 11.

## FEDERAL RESPONSE PLAN ESFs (AND PRIMARY AGENCIES)

- ESF 1-TRANSPORTATION  
Department of Transportation
- ESF 2-COMMUNICATIONS  
National Communications System
- ESF 3-PUBLIC WORKS AND ENGINEERING  
Army Corps of Engineers
- ESF 4-FIRE FIGHTING  
Department of Agriculture - Forest Service
- ESF 5-INFORMATION AND PLANNING  
Federal Emergency Management Agency
- ESF 6-MASS CARE  
American Red Cross
- ESF 7-RESOURCE SUPPORT  
General Services Administration
- ESF 8-HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES  
Department of Health and Human Services
- ESF 9-URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE  
Federal Emergency Management Agency
- ESF 10-HAZARDOUS MATERIALS  
Environmental Protection Agency
- ESF 11-FOOD  
Department of Agriculture
- ESF 12-ENERGY  
Department of Energy

## ESF #10-HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

**E**SF #10-Hazardous Materials provides for a coordinated response to large-scale releases of hazardous materials by incorporating the response mechanisms of the National Oil and Hazardous Materials Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP). The Director of EPA's Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention Office serves as the chairman of ESF #10. He is also EPA's representative to the interagency policy-level coordinating body, the Catastrophic Disaster Response Group. He ensures the Agency has carried out the proper planning and preparedness activities and is ready to respond to a major disaster.

## EPA TAKES ACTION UNDER THE FRP

**D**uring the Midwest floods of 1993, EPA assumed significant responsibility under ESF #10. In the nine states that were declared disaster areas, ESF #10 personnel responded to incidents involving hazardous materials such as releases of chemicals, oil, gasoline, and propane. Under ESF #10, EPA was charged with collecting

over 16,000 free-floating drums and containers in the flooded area. In Missouri and other flood-affected states, EPA personnel coordinated a household hazardous waste collection program and coordinated an extensive water sampling program. The household hazardous waste collection program was applied again during the 1994 floods in both Georgia and Texas. Thousands of pounds of household hazardous materials were collected during these operations and safely disposed of to prevent the waste from eventually being deposited in local landfills.

## FRP LINKS WITH THE NATIONAL RESPONSE TEAM

**I**n the 1970s, the federal government set up a mechanism for responding to large-scale releases of hazardous substances or oil spills: the National Contingency Plan (NCP). It was developed to ensure that the resources and expertise of the federal government would be immediately available for major incidents that require federal, or regional, response. The NCP established the National Response Team (NRT), composed of 15 federal agencies and departments. In addition, the NCP also set up Regional Response Teams (RRTs), with representatives of the same agencies and departments as the NRT, plus representation by states. EPA chairs the NRT, while the U.S. Coast Guard serves as the vice-chair. EPA and the Coast Guard co-chair the RRTs. At the EPA headquarters level, the ESF #10 chairman serves as a bridge between the National Response Team and the Federal Response Plan partners. The ESF #10 chairman is also the chairman of the National Response Team. At the regional level, the regional ESF #10 chairs function as the liaison to the RRTs. When the FRP was developed, the NRT/RRT structure for handling hazardous materials releases and oil spills was already in existence. This framework was incorporated into ESF #10 of the Federal Response Plan for use during major natural disasters. As a leading partner in the Federal Response Plan, EPA efficiently and effectively assists state and local governments when disaster strikes.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION...

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