

Coordinating Agency:

Department of Homeland Security/
Federal Emergency Management
Agency

Cooperating Agencies:

All Federal departments and agencies (and other organizations) with assigned primary or supporting Emergency Support Function responsibilities

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The Catastrophic Incident Annex to the *National Response Framework (NRF-CIA)* establishes the context and overarching strategy for implementing and coordinating an accelerated, proactive national response to a catastrophic incident.

A more detailed and operationally specific *National Response Framework Catastrophic Incident Supplement (NRF-CIS)* is published independently of the *NRF* and annexes.

Scope

A catastrophic incident, as defined by the *NRF*, is any natural or manmade incident, including terrorism, that results in extraordinary levels of mass casualties, damage, or disruption severely affecting the population, infrastructure, environment, economy, national morale, and/or government functions. A catastrophic incident could result in sustained nationwide impacts over a prolonged period of time; almost immediately exceeds resources normally available to State, tribal, local, and private-sector authorities in the impacted area; and significantly interrupts governmental operations and emergency services to such an extent that national security could be threatened. These factors drive the urgency for coordinated national planning to ensure accelerated Federal and/or national assistance.

Recognizing that Federal and/or national resources are required to augment overwhelmed State, tribal, and local response efforts, the *NRF-CIA* establishes protocols to preidentify and rapidly deploy key essential resources (e.g., medical teams, search and rescue teams, transportable shelters, medical and equipment caches, etc.) that are expected to be urgently needed/required to save lives and contain incidents.

Upon the occurrence of a catastrophic incident, or in advance if determined by the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Government will deploy Federal resources, organized into incident-specific "packages," in accordance with the *NRF-CIS* and in coordination with the affected State and incident command structure.

Where State, tribal, or local governments are unable to establish or maintain an effective incident command structure due to catastrophic conditions, the Federal Government, at the direction of the Secretary of Homeland Security, may establish a unified command structure, led by the Unified Coordination Group (UCG), to save lives, protect property, maintain operation of critical infrastructure/key resources (CIKR), contain the event, and protect national security. The Federal Government shall transition to its role of coordinating and supporting the State, tribal, or local government when they are capable of reestablishing their incident command.

The *NRF-CIA* is primarily designed to address no-notice or short-notice incidents of catastrophic magnitude, where the need for Federal assistance is obvious and immediate, where anticipatory planning and resource pre-positioning were precluded, and where the exact nature of needed resources and assets is not known. Appropriately tailored assets and responses identified in the *NRF-CIS*, as well as other select Federal resources and assets, may also be deployed in support of a projected catastrophic event (e.g., a major hurricane) with advance warning in support of the anticipated requests of State, tribal, and local governments.

Policies

A catastrophic incident will likely trigger a Presidential major disaster declaration and result in the Secretary of Homeland Security or a designee implementing the *NRF-CIA/CIS*.

All deploying Federal resources remain under the control of their respective Federal department or agency during mobilization and deployment. Some Federal departments and agencies have the authority, under their own statutes, to deploy directly to the incident scene.

Federal resources arriving at a National Logistics Staging Area (NLSA) remain there until requested by State/local incident command authorities, when they are integrated into the response effort.

Federal assets unilaterally deployed to the NLSA in accordance with the *NRF-CIS* do not require a State cost share. However, in accordance with the Stafford Act, State requests for use of deployed Federal assets may require cost-sharing.

For no-notice or short-notice catastrophic incidents, Federal resources identified in the execution schedule of the *NRF-CIS* will be mobilized and deployed, unless it can be credibly established that an action listed is not needed at the catastrophic incident venue.

If during a response, it is determined that the incident is catastrophic in nature, any remaining actions not originally initiated from the execution schedule will be initiated.

States are encouraged to conduct planning in collaboration with the Federal Government for catastrophic incidents as part of their steady-state preparedness activities.

The Federal Government, in collaboration with States, tribes, local governments, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), develops proactive plans for activation and implementation of the *NRF-CIA*, to include situations where the need exceeds or challenges the resources and/or capabilities of State and local governments to respond and where the Federal Government may temporarily assume roles typically performed by State, tribal, and local governments.

The occurrence or threat of multiple or successive catastrophic incidents may significantly reduce the size, speed, and depth of the Federal response. If deemed necessary or prudent, the Federal Government may reduce the allocation of finite resources when multiple venues are competing for the same resources.

Situation

The initial response to a catastrophic incident starts on a local level with the local, tribal and/or State responders. However, there may be circumstances that exceed the capabilities of State, local, or tribal authorities in which they are unable to initially establish or maintain a command structure for incident response. In these instances, accelerated Federal response may be warranted, and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)/Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will coordinate response activities until local, tribal, and/or State authorities are capable or have re-established their incident command structure.

Continuity of Operations (COOP)/Continuity of Government (COG): Following a catastrophic event, segments of State, tribal, and local governments as well as NGOs and the private sector may be severely compromised. The Federal Government and its national partners must be prepared to fill potential gaps to ensure continuity of government and public- and private-sector operations. The incident may cause significant disruption of the impacted area's CIKR, such as energy, transportation, telecommunications, law enforcement, and public health and health care systems.

Incident Condition: Normal procedures for certain Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) may be expedited or streamlined to address the magnitude of urgent requirements of the incident. All ESFs must explore economies of scale to maximize utilization and efficiency of limited resources. In the case of a catastrophic incident, it is expected that the Federal Government or other national entities will provide expedited assistance in one or more of the following areas:

- **Mass Evacuations (ESF #5 – Emergency Management):** While primarily a State, tribal, and local responsibility, Federal support may be required for large-scale evacuations, organized or self-directed, that may occur. There may also be a need for evacuation of large numbers of people, including patients in local hospitals, nursing homes, and extended care facilities, as well as those with special needs, household pets, and service animals, out of the impacted area to safe areas in other States. Significant transportation and shelter coordination and resources may be required. There is likely to be significant shortage of response and casualty and/or evacuee reception capabilities throughout the impacted area. FEMA will support State(s) in evacuating pets and animals in a declared major disaster.

Incident response efforts by State, tribal, and local governments, as well as Federal agencies, frequently involve air operations and flights for evacuation (ESF #5), search and rescue (ESF #9), and public safety and security (ESF #13). In all cases, all operations must be coordinated with the Department of Transportation (DOT)/Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which manages the Nation's airspace and air traffic, before, during, and after a catastrophic incident.

- **Mass Care, Housing, and Human Services (ESF #6 – Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services):** The ability to support the provision of temporary shelter, food, emergency first aid, and other essential life support to people, household pets, and service animals in the affected area may be complicated by contaminated resources or facilities and impact the ability to quickly transport resources into the area.
- **Search and Rescue (ESF #9 – Search and Rescue):** Resources and personnel to perform operational and tactical activities (e.g., locating, extricating, and providing onsite medical treatment to victims trapped in collapsed structures) are limited. If search and rescue operations are required in areas of contamination, the limited availability of properly equipped personnel and resources supports and underscores the need for prompt Federal response.

- **Decontamination**

Victim Decontamination (ESF #8 – Public Health and Medical Services): State, local, tribal, and territorial officials retain primary responsibility for victim screening and decontamination operations. ESF #8 can provide technical assistance regarding how they can expand their capability to meet their decontamination requirements.

Environmental Assessment and Decontamination (ESF #10): Incidents involving a chemical, biological, or radiological weapon of mass destruction (WMD) may create significant environmental contamination, resulting in the immediate need to generate information on environmental contamination levels to support emergency decisionmaking to ensure both public and responder protection. In addition, environmental decontamination and cleanup needs for buildings, critical infrastructure, and other areas may overwhelm State, tribal, and local capabilities.

- **Public Health and Medical Support (ESF #8):** There is a significant need for public health and medical support, including mental health services. Medical and mental health support is required at medical facilities, casualty evacuation, embarkation, debarkation, and reception points and shelters and other locations to support field operations. In addition, any contamination requirement increases the requirement for technical assistance/resources.
- **Medical Equipment and Supplies (ESF #8):** Shortages of available supplies of preventive and therapeutic pharmaceuticals and qualified medical personnel to administer available prophylaxis are likely. Timely distribution of prophylaxis may forestall additional illnesses, and reduce the impact of disease.
- **Casualty Transportation (ESF #8):** Federal resources may be required to manage the injured, exposed victims, and deceased if their numbers are extremely high.
- **Public Safety and Security (ESF #13 – Public Safety and Security):** Federal resources may be required to augment State, tribal, and local governments in protecting the public and securing the impacted area. Law enforcement and emergency management officials who normally respond to incidents may be among those affected and unable to perform their duties.
- **Public Information (ESF #15 – External Affairs):** When State, tribal, and local public communications channels are overwhelmed during a catastrophic incident, the Federal Government must immediately provide resources to assist in delivering clear and coherent public information guidance and consistent messages to the affected areas.
- **Critical Infrastructure (CIKR Support Annex):** CIKR include the assets, systems, networks, and functions that are vital to the American way of life. A terrorist attack on CIKR or other natural or manmade disaster could significantly disrupt the functioning of government and business alike, and produce cascading effects far beyond the physical location of the incident. The Federal Government facilitates expedited information sharing and analysis of impacts to CIKR, prioritized recommendations, and processes to consider incident-related requests for assistance from CIKR owners and operators.

Planning Assumptions

A catastrophic incident will result in large numbers of casualties and/or displaced persons, possibly in the tens to hundreds of thousands. During a catastrophic incident response, priority is given to human life-saving operations.

The nature and scope of a catastrophic incident will immediately overwhelm State, tribal, and local response capabilities and require immediate Federal support.

A detailed and credible common operating picture will not be achievable for 24 to 48 hours (or longer) after the incident. As a result, response activities may have to begin without the benefit of a detailed or complete situation and critical needs assessment.

The nature and scope of the catastrophic incident will include major natural or manmade hazards including chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or high-yield explosive attacks, and cyber attacks.

A catastrophic incident has unique dimensions/characteristics requiring that response plans/strategies be flexible enough to effectively address emerging needs and requirements.

A catastrophic incident will occur with little or no warning. Some incidents may be well underway before detection.

Multiple incidents will occur simultaneously or sequentially in contiguous and/or noncontiguous areas. Some incidents, such as a biological WMD attack, may be dispersed over a large geographic area and lack a defined incident site.

A catastrophic incident will produce environmental impacts that severely challenge the ability and capacity of governments and communities to achieve a timely recovery.

Federal resources must be capable of mobilization and deployment before they are requested via normal *NRF* protocols.

Large-scale evacuations, organized or self-directed, may occur.

Existing health care systems in the impacted area are expected to be quickly overwhelmed, requiring evacuation of existing patients from these facilities to accommodate increased patient workload if the facility remains operational. Additionally, those persons with special needs, including residents of nursing homes and extended care facilities, will require special attention during evacuation.

Large numbers of people will be left temporarily or permanently homeless and may require prolonged temporary housing. Some displaced people will require specialized attention, healthcare assistance, and assistance with activities of daily living based on their special needs.

A large number of household pets and service animals will require appropriate care, sheltering, medical attention, and transportation.

A catastrophic incident will have significant international dimensions, including impacts on the health and welfare of border community populations, cross-border trade, transit, law enforcement coordination, and others.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

State, Tribal, Local, NGO, and Private-Sector Response

State, tribal, local, NGO, and private-sector response operations and responsibilities are covered in the *NRF* and the *NRF-CIS*. This annex addresses the proactive Federal response to be taken in anticipation of or following a catastrophic incident to rapidly provide critical resources to assist and augment State, tribal, local, NGO, and private-sector response efforts.

Federal Response

In accordance with *NRF* provisions for a proactive Federal response to catastrophic incidents, the *NRF-CIA* employs an expedited approach to the provision of Federal resources to save lives and contain the incident.

Guiding principles for a proactive Federal catastrophic incident response include the following:

- The primary mission is to save lives, protect property and critical infrastructure, contain the event, and protect the national security.
- Standard procedures outlined in the *NRF* regarding requests for assistance may be expedited or, under extreme circumstances, temporarily suspended in the immediate aftermath of an incident of catastrophic magnitude, pursuant to existing law.
- Preidentified Federal response resources are mobilized and deployed, and, if required, begin emergency operations to commence life-safety activities.
- Notification and full coordination with States occur, but the coordination process should not delay or impede the rapid mobilization and deployment of critical Federal resources.
- Upon recognition that a catastrophic incident condition (e.g., involving mass casualties and/or mass evacuation) exists, the Secretary of Homeland Security immediately begins implementation of the *NRF-CIA*. Upon notification from the National Operations Center (NOC) that the *NRF-CIA* has been implemented, Federal departments and agencies immediately:
 - Take actions to activate, mobilize, and deploy incident-specific resources in accordance with the *NRF-CIS*.
 - Take actions to protect life, property, and critical infrastructure under their jurisdiction, and provide assistance within the affected area.
 - Commence those hazard-specific activities established under the appropriate and applicable *NRF Incident Annex(es)*, including the *NRF-CIA*.
 - Commence functional activities and responsibilities established under the *NRF ESF Annexes*.

NRF-CIA actions that the Federal Government takes in response to a catastrophic incident include:

- For no-notice or short-notice catastrophic events resulting in little or no time to assess the requirements of the State, tribal, and local governments, all Federal departments and agencies initiate actions to mobilize and deploy resources by scenario type as planned for in the *NRF-CIS*.
- For those potential catastrophic incidents where there is time to coordinate with State, tribal, and local governments, as well as private-sector and NGO authorities, Federal departments and agencies will pre-deploy appropriately tailored elements specified in the *NRF-CIS*, as well as other Federal resources as required to meet the anticipated demands of the specific incident scenario.
- For no-notice/short-notice catastrophic events when there is little or no time to assess the requirements of the State, tribal, and local governments, Federal departments and agencies initiate actions to mobilize and deploy resources by scenario type as planned for in the *NRF-CIS*. To that end, the Department of Defense (DOD) is prepared to provide capabilities in the following support categories: aviation, communication, defense coordinating

officer/defense coordinating element, medical treatment, patient evacuation, decontamination, and logistics.

All Federal departments and agencies and organizations assigned primary or supporting ESF responsibilities immediately begin implementation of those responsibilities, as appropriate or when directed by the President.

Incident-specific resources and capabilities (e.g., medical teams, search and rescue teams, equipment, transportable shelters, preventive and therapeutic pharmaceutical caches, etc.) are activated and prepared for deployment to an NLSA near the incident site. The development of site-specific catastrophic incident response strategies (as detailed in the *NRF-CIS*) that include the preidentification of incident-specific critical resource requirements and corresponding deployment/employment strategies accelerate the timely provision of critical capabilities.

Regional Federal facilities are activated and prepared to receive and treat casualties from the incident area. Federal facilities are directed to reprioritize services (in some cases possibly reducing or postponing certain customary services) until life-saving activities are concluded. The development of site-specific catastrophic incident response plans that include the preidentification of projected casualty and mass care support requirements and potentially available facilities expands the response architecture and accelerates the availability of such resources.

Supplementary support agreements with NGOs and the private sector are activated.

Given the projected high demand for Federal support, as well as the potential national security implications of a catastrophic incident, Federal departments and agencies may be asked to redirect efforts from their day-to-day responsibilities to support the response effort.

RESPONSIBILITIES

This section summarizes Federal department and agency responsibilities under the *NRF-CIA*. For a complete listing of Federal department and agency responsibilities under the *NRF-CIA*, refer to the *NRF-CIS*, which is maintained as a separate document. For additional Federal department and agency responsibilities, refer to the individual ESF and Support Annexes and hazard-specific Incident Annexes at the NRF Resource Center (www.fema.gov/nrf).

Coordinating Agency: DHS

- Determines that a catastrophic incident has occurred and implements the *NRF-CIA*.
- Notifies all Federal departments and agencies to implement the *NRF-CIA* and the *NRF-CIS*.
- Upon implementation of the *NRF-CIA*:
 - Activates and deploys (or prepares to deploy) DHS-managed teams, equipment caches, and other resources in accordance with the *NRF-CIS*.
 - Identifies, prepares, and operationalizes facilities critical to supporting the movement and reception of deploying Federal resources.
 - Activates national-level facilities and capabilities in accordance with the *NRF-CIS* and standard *NRF* protocols.
 - Establishes and maintains communications with incident command authorities to ensure a common and current operating picture regarding critical resource requirements. As specific resource requirements are identified, advises DHS/FEMA to reprioritize and adjust accordingly the schedule of execution for resource flow in the *NRF-CIS*.

Catastrophic Incident Annex

- Makes every attempt to establish contact with the impacted State(s) to coordinate the deployment of Federal resources in support of the State(s).

Cooperating Agencies

When notified by the NOC that the Secretary of Homeland Security has implemented the *NRF-CIA*, Federal departments and agencies (and the American Red Cross):

- Activate and deploy (or prepare to deploy) agency- or ESF-managed teams, equipment caches, and other resources in accordance with the *NRF-CIS*.
- Commence ESF responsibilities as appropriate.
- Commence assessments of the probable consequences of the incident and projected resource requirements.
- Commence development of shorter and longer term response and recovery strategies.

Federal departments and agencies and State, local, tribal, and territorial officials assigned primary responsibility for one or more functional response areas are identified below.

- **Mass Care:** DHS/FEMA
- **Mass Evacuation:** DHS/FEMA
- **Search and Rescue:** DHS/FEMA, U.S. Coast Guard, Department of the Interior, DOD
- **Decontamination:**
 - Victim Decontamination: State, local, tribal, and territorial officials
 - Environmental Assessment and Decontamination: DHS, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (critical infrastructure and the environment)
- **Public Health and Medical Support:** HHS
- **Medical Equipment and Supplies:** HHS
- **Patient Movement:** HHS and DOD
- **Mass Fatality:** HHS
- **Housing:** DHS, Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- **Public and Incident Communications:** DHS
- **Transportation:** DOT
- **Private-Sector Support:** DHS
- **Logistics:** DHS
- **CIKR Support:** DHS

The *NRF-CIS* provides a list of the specific actions that are initiated upon activation of the *NRF-CIA*. The following Federal departments and agencies and other organizations are assigned specific responsibilities as cooperating agencies:

- Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- Department of Defense (DOD)
- Department of Energy (DOE)
- Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
- Department of Transportation (DOT)
- Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- American Red Cross