




U.S. Department
of Transportation
Federal Highway
Administration

Memorandum

Subject: **ACTION:** Expedited Emergency Relief (ER)
Quick Release Allocation Process

Date: October 2, 2013

From: Walter C. Waidelich, Jr. 
Associate Administrator for Infrastructure

In Reply
Refer To: HIPA-10

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Federal Lands Highway

To: Directors of Field Services
Federal Lands Highway Division Engineers
Director of Technical Services
Division Administrators

We are revising the process for quick release of ER funds to minimize the administrative burden during a natural disaster or catastrophic event and streamline the process by providing an allocation of ER funds as soon as possible after a significant, eligible disaster strikes.

Under this new process, Federal-aid Division Administrators and Federal Lands Highway Division Engineers now have the authority to initiate a quick release request based on their determination that the event will qualify for ER funds and on oral communications with their State or Federal partners. We will no longer require a request letter from the State or Federal Agency (or Agencies) before making a quick release ER funding allocation. Division Administrators and Division Engineers will continue to ensure that all ER program requirements are met before obligating any ER funds.

We expect each division to take a **proactive** role through early communication with its State or Federal partners when a disaster or emergency occurs. Federal-aid divisions should collaborate with the Office of Program Administration to expedite the quick release request. Federal Lands divisions should coordinate directly with their Office of Federal Lands Highway Headquarters, which will coordinate overall Federal Lands requirements with the Office of Program Administration. The Office of Program Administration will coordinate with appropriate Headquarters program offices before submitting the request to the FHWA Administrator for consideration and approval.

In establishing eligibility for a quick release, each division must find that the event may be reasonably expected to exceed the \$700,000 federal share regulatory threshold. This initial estimate will be based on rapidly relayed information from the State or Federal partner and/or media coverage that provides a general expectation that the event cost is significant. Detailed site inspections are not necessary at this initial stage. Although we do not require a written request from the State or Federal partner at this stage, the division should document its oral communications with them.

Expedited quick releases typically will be for one to two million dollars, although larger amounts may be warranted for large-scale disasters. Followup quick releases may be appropriate once the size and scale of the event become clearer.

The following steps generally describe the expedited quick release request process:

- The Division Administrator or Division Engineer initiates communication with the State or Federal Agency(s) to determine if an ER-eligible event has likely occurred and if ER funds will be requested.
- The division continues to monitor event status and communicates with the State or Federal Agency(s) to stay abreast of the needs.
- The Division Administrator or Division Engineer identifies the need for a quick release after determining with a reasonable certainty that the event threshold will be met and a Presidential or Governor's emergency or disaster declaration has been issued or is expected to be issued (not applicable to Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO)).
- The division consults with the Office of Program Administration or Federal Lands Headquarters as appropriate.
- The Division Administrator or Division Engineer sends a request to the e-mail group in Outlook named "FHWA ER Quick Release." This e-mail group has been set up for rapid communication of all quick release requests.
- The Office of Program Administration sends a recommendation to the Administrator by e-mail.
- The Administrator decides whether to approve a quick release. Once the expedited quick release request is approved, the Office of the Administrator will send an e-mail to the e-mail group in Outlook named "FHWA ER Quick Release" indicating the approval and amount of the quick release.
- The Office of Policy's Congressional Affairs Team will coordinate a concurrent notification to the congressional authorizing and appropriations committees through the Grants Notification System. The Office of Public Affairs may then issue a press release.
- For Federal-aid events, the Office of Program Administration will send an allocation memorandum to the division with a copy to the Office of the Chief Financial Officer to load the allocation into the Fiscal Management Information System. For ERFO events, Federal Lands Headquarters will notify the Federal Lands division. All ERFO allocations will be processed through Delphi.

- As soon as the President's or Governor's declaration is made and the division has received sufficient information on the extent of damage to make an affirmation of ER eligibility, it can obligate the quick release funds. If the ER funds are not obligated within 6 months of the allocation date and the division has determined the funds are no longer needed based on consultation with the State or Federal agency(s), Headquarters will withdraw them.

We request that the Division Administrator and Division Engineer include as much information as possible in the request (but not at the expense of time) so that Headquarters has sufficient information for congressional notifications. The attachment lists the requested information.

The *Emergency Relief Manual* will be updated to reflect this change.

If you have any questions on this new process, please contact Greg Wolf at 202-366-4655 for ER issues. Contact Sergio Mayorga at 202-366-9491 for ERFO questions.

Attachment

ATTACHMENT

INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR QUICK RELEASE

Event Description	Flooding, wind, earthquake, landslide, etc.
Facilities Damaged	General description of routes, corridors, structures, etc. This need not be a comprehensive list. It should be sufficient to show that an ER event has occurred and that a quick release is warranted.
Preliminary Damage Estimate	This will be very preliminary, just enough to help support the quick release. It may be for only a few key sites and based on average cost per mile or cost per bridge
Congressional Districts	If specific congressional district data are not available, the Division may provide generic descriptions of affected areas, such as counties, cities, or areas (western, eastern, southern etc.).