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 the video


Federal-aid Program Overview

Emergency Relief (ER)

Initial Steps for Requesting ER Funds

www.fhwa.dot.gov/federal-aidessentials

A more detailed look at the process for requesting ER funds, including the initial ER application



When disaster strikes, the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA's) Emergency Relief, or ER, program can help fund repairs to roads, bridges, and other infrastructure eligible for federal aid.



Another module in this series provides an overview of the ER program. This module offers more detailed information about the process for requesting ER funds, including the initial ER application. An additional module gives more information about receiving the reimbursement for approved ER funding after FHWA approves the completed work.

The ER application process begins after an official disaster proclamation by a governor or the President. To qualify for ER funds, affected counties must be included in the proclamation.



Local agencies must apply for ER funding through their State department of transportation, or DOT. The DOT signals its interest by submitting a notice of intent to the FHWA division administrator once it appears the event will qualify. The division administrator responds with an acknowledgement letter, authorizing general Federal eligibility for initial engineering and emergency repairs, and for agency forces to do the work. Final ER eligibility and reimbursement will be based on DOT documentation submitted later showing cost, justification, and compliance with Federal requirements.



Emergency repairs to restore traffic and limit the damage to the remaining facilities are ongoing. Agencies do not have to wait for FHWA funding approval to perform emergency repairs, though they do need to ensure that routine Federal-aid requirements are included in all construction contracts.

Even as some emergency repairs begin, the DOT does an initial disaster assessment, and makes a more detailed request for ER funding using either the standard application method or the quick-release application method.



In the Standard Application method, State, local, and FHWA personnel perform initial damage assessments at all or a sampling of sites.

The DOT is responsible to coordinate with agencies critical to this effort, such as the Office of Federal Lands Highways, and other environmental resource agencies. Coordination helps to arrive at consistent and reliable damage estimates.



The assessment team can perform drive-by inspections, sometimes referred to as

windshield inspections, to expedite the initial ER funds request. However, the team will eventually complete detailed site inspections to justify the Federal funding.



The team documents the damage at each site with FHWA's Detailed Damage Inspection Report form, or DDIR. The report lists the specific location and type of Federal-aid roadway along with describing the damage. Location maps, field site sketches, and photographs help document the damage. The DDIR also alerts FHWA of potential environmental or historical impacts, and includes any recommendations from the FHWA field engineer.



Inspectors identified the repair work as either emergency or permanent, and suggest the most feasible and practical repair methods.



The FHWA division office then helps the DOT compile the damage assessment data from the DDIRs to create a Damage Survey Summary Report or DSSR. The DSSR is the initial application for funds, and describes the extent of the emergency event and the serious damage to Federal-aid roadways and facilities. Serious damage is when major or unusual damage severely impacts safety or closes the roadway and which requires repairs beyond those for normal heavy maintenance.



Once the DOT is satisfied with the data, it submits the DSSR to FHWA within three weeks of the event. FHWA uses the report to establish the scope of damage and general eligibility.

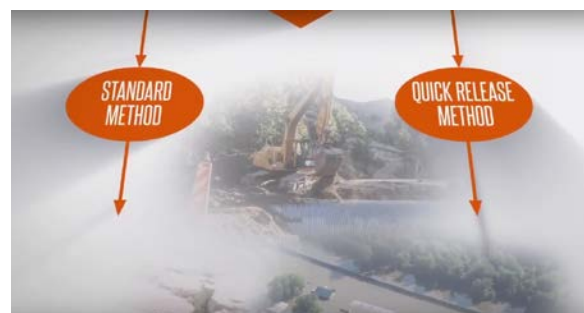


If the DOT cannot submit a comprehensive application because data from multiple sites is still coming in, it can request partial

funding based on available and credible information. The DSSR and the ER application evolve as they are updated with more information from the detailed inspections. The DOT must submit the final complete list of projects within two years of the date of the disaster.



The Quick-Release application method is another option for State DOTs to request the first portion of ER funding. This option requires a higher level of Federal approval, and is generally reserved for larger events where getting some early cash flow is important. The quick release method sets up conditions for FHWA to allocate and release some limited funds for initial emergency repair costs as a down payment on the ultimate ER repairs. These funds can help with emergency repairs related to traffic control, detours, and the prevention of further damage.



The Quick-Release application requires the DOT's verbal request, and less detailed preliminary damage assessments, sometimes using media reports or aerial surveys. The time frame is a few days for submittal. Later, the DOT must submit documentation detailing the remaining

eligible costs using the standard application method.



Let's follow a flood event involving seven counties in a Midwestern state to see how the emergency relief process works for the initial request of funds.

These counties experienced serious flooding over several days. As the floodwaters receded, State and local officials started emergency operations to restore essential traffic and prevent further damage to roads and bridges. The governor issued an emergency proclamation for all seven counties. Next, the DOT e-mailed the FHWA division office stating the DOT's intent to apply for ER funds. The division administrator acknowledged the DOT's request.

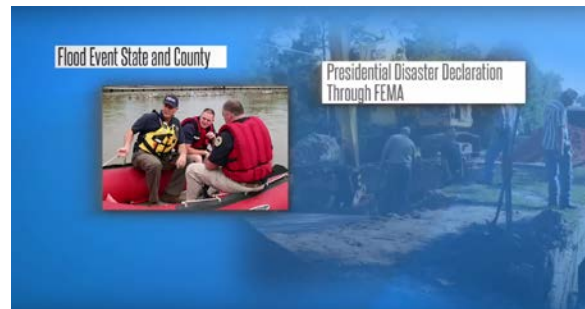


The flood impacts were large, so the DOT used the Quick-Release application method with media reports and aerial surveys documenting the initial damage assessment. FHWA approved the request, and the State received authorization for the initial funds within a few days.



Federal, State, and local officials then conducted more detailed damage assessment inspections to create the Damage Survey Summary Report, which was submitted later for all repairs sites included in the disaster event.

State and county officials continue doing emergency repairs and awaited approval from FHWA to start permanent repairs.



The governor also requested and received a presidential disaster declaration through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA. The FEMA request was separate from the FHWA ER program and covered items like debris removal and repairs to non-Federal-aid highways.

To learn more about the Emergency Relief Program, watch the other ER modules in this series. In addition, ER policies and procedures, such as the Quick-Release application, can change to meet the demands of emergency relief support, so please contact your State department of transportation and FHWA division office for the latest information.

Additional Resources

- FHWA's Emergency Relief Program Web site
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/programadmin/erelief.cfm>
- FHWA Order 5182.1 - Emergency Relief Program Responsibilities
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/legsregs/directives/orders/51821.cfm>
- FHWA's Emergency Relief Manual
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/erm/er.pdf>
- Emergency Relief questions and answers related to MAP-21
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/qandas/qaer.cfm>
- FHWA's Web site covering Emergency Relief for Federally Owned Roads (ERFO)
<http://www.efl.fhwa.dot.gov/programs/erfo.aspx>
- FHWA's Contract Administration Core Curriculum providing an overview of Federal contracting requirements
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/programadmin/contracts/coretoc.cfm>
- FEMA's policy and guidance covering public assistance
<http://www.fema.gov/public-assistance-policy-and-guidance>
- FEMA facts sheet on debris removal on Federal-aid Highways
<http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/29617?id=6640>

The content of this document is not a substitute for information obtained from State departments of transportation, appropriate FHWA Division Offices, and applicable laws. Scenarios have been simplified for emphasis and do not necessarily reflect the actual range of requirements applicable to the scenario or this topic. This document was created under contract number DTFH63-11-F-00066 by the Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, and is offered to the public to heighten and focus awareness of Federal-aid requirements within the local public agencies community and reinforces the importance of these necessary policies, procedures, and practices.

This Companion Resource is the script content for the video production of the same name.