

Unified Federal Review Process



Frequently Asked Questions

I. Establishing the Unified Federal Environmental and Historic Preservation Review (UFR) Process

Q: Under what authority was the UFR Process created?

A: The UFR Process was established on July 29, 2014, by the execution of the *Memorandum of Understanding Establishing the Unified Federal Environmental and Historic Preservation Review Process* (UFR MOU) among eleven federal agencies involved in the environmental and historic preservation (EHP) reviews associated with disaster recovery assistance following a presidentially declared disaster. The establishment of the UFR Process was mandated in the Sandy Recovery Improvement Act of 2013, which added Section 429 to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

Q: What is the UFR Process?

A: The UFR Process enhances the ability of federal agencies to expedite the reviews that ensure compliance with EHP requirements for disaster recovery projects (EHP reviews) through a series of new Tools and Mechanisms designed to be adaptive and flexible to the needs of a specific disaster. The UFR Process improves the efficiency of EHP reviews resulting in the potential for faster decisions on federally funded, approved or permitted activities which will expedite recovery for communities and other applicants for disaster assistance.

Q: What federal agencies are part of the UFR Process and what is their role?

A: The following agencies are members of the UFR Steering Group responsible for leading the implementation of the UFR Process:

- The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation;
- The Council on Environmental Quality;
- The Department of Homeland Security; and
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The following agencies are signatories to the UFR MOU and are responsible for implementing the UFR Process to include attending meetings, providing staff and resources, using the Tools and Mechanisms and working to achieve coordinated EHP reviews:

- The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation;
- The Council on Environmental Quality;
- The Department of Agriculture;

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- The Department of the Army – Civil Works;
- The Department of Commerce;
- The Department of Energy;
- The Department of Homeland Security;
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development;
- The Department of the Interior;
- The Department of Transportation; and
- The Environmental Protection Agency.

II. EHP Requirements and the UFR Process

Q: What are EHP requirements?

A: EHP requirements are the federal statutes, regulations and executive orders that ensure compliance with environmental and historic preservation requirements under federal law relating to disaster recovery projects. EHP requirements support the protection and stewardship of natural and cultural resources within the United States and its territories and possessions.

Q: What is an EHP review?

A: An EHP review is the process the government uses to ensure that projects and programs entirely or partly financed, assisted, conducted, regulated or approved by federal agencies comply with various EHP requirements, if appropriate. Applicants for federal assistance, approvals or permits must accept the responsibility of complying with EHP requirements specified by the federal, state agencies and/or responsible entities. As part of this responsibility, applicants participate through providing the information necessary to complete EHP reviews and/or obtain the necessary permits or approvals.

Q: How are natural and cultural resources related to disaster recovery projects?

A: Disaster recovery projects should be designed, whenever possible, to have minimal adverse impacts on the environment in which they will occur. They should strive to respect the cultural and historic resources that define communities and contribute to their well-being and unique character.

Q: What resources are available to federal EHP practitioners to assist in UFR Process implementation?

A: Several new Tools and Mechanisms have been developed to assist the EHP practitioner. The following resources, when finalized, will be available on the UFR Webpage to assist EHP practitioners:

- EHP Agency Point of Contact List (Agency POC List);
- Template Environmental Checklist for FEMA and HUD;

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- Data Standards List;
- IT Resources List;
- EHP Disaster Recovery Skills Checklist (EHP Skills Checklist);
- EHP UFR Disaster Recovery Training and Training for Recovery Leadership;
- UFR Guidance for EHP Practitioners (Practitioner Guidance);
- Prototype Programmatic Agreement for Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (PPA);
- Disaster-Specific Memorandum of Understanding (Disaster-Specific MOU);
- Data Sharing Agreement Content; and
- Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS).

Q: Does the UFR Process alter existing EHP requirements?

A: No. The UFR Process does not change any existing EHP laws, regulations or other requirements. Instead it helps EHP practitioners, applicants and stakeholders identify efficiencies in the process through the use of new Tools and Mechanisms.

III. Implementing the UFR Process

Q: What disaster recovery projects are addressed by the UFR Process?

A: The UFR Process is applicable to all federal disaster recovery projects following a presidentially declared disaster. Such projects are aimed at restoring a community's facilities to pre-disaster condition or to pre-disaster capacity, assisting with post-disaster needs and improving community resilience for future disasters.

Q: What are the benefits of implementing the UFR Process?

A: The UFR Process enhances the ability of federal agencies to expedite disaster recovery EHP reviews through:

- Consistency and coordination among multiple federal agency EHP reviews;
- Collaboration and coordination among federal, tribal, state and local agencies;
- Leveraged and efficient use of agency staff and funds;
- Quick resolution of delays;
- More informed federal decision making; and
- Expedited execution and implementation of disaster recovery projects.

Q: How will the UFR Process be coordinated across federal agencies?

A: The UFR Process created new roles, including a headquarters-level coordinator and an on-the-ground advisor, the UFR advisor, which will help coordinate and implement the UFR Process. The UFR MOU also establishes roles and responsibilities for the federal agencies involved and their commitment to implementing the UFR Process.

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Q: What is the role of the UFR advisor?

A: The UFR advisor serves as a liaison and coordinator between and among disaster recovery agencies in the field and helps to identify opportunities to expedite EHP compliance and to promote unification during disaster recovery. For example, the UFR advisor identifies data sharing opportunities and facilitates the development of data sharing agreements to simplify data use. The UFR advisor also will work with the disaster recovery leadership to identify communication opportunities with tribal, state and local applicants to identify and anticipate any UFR Process needs.

Q: How will the success of the UFR Process be measured?

A: The UFR Process was designed to be scalable to the needs of specific disasters and to incorporate a process of continual improvement that will ensure that the process as implemented meets the goal of expediting and unifying EHP reviews for presidentially declared disaster recovery projects. Metrics to measure the success of the UFR Process and the specific Tools and Mechanisms will be defined beginning in the first year of implementation.

Q: Will projects that are not part of the recovery from a presidentially declared disaster also benefit from the UFR Process?

A: The new Tools and Mechanisms developed as part of the UFR Process may be useful during the EHP review of a variety of other federally funded, approved or permitted projects. While the UFR Process itself would not be used, agencies can use the new Tools and Mechanisms for any project.

Q: How does the UFR Process relate to the National Disaster Recovery Framework (NDRF)?

A: The NDRF provides guidance that enables effective recovery support to disaster-impacted states, tribes and local jurisdictions. It provides a flexible structure that enables disaster recovery managers to operate in a unified and collaborative manner. It also focuses on how best to restore, redevelop and revitalize the health, social, economic, natural and environmental fabric of the community and build a more resilient Nation. The UFR Process integrates with the NDRF by complementing its goals and leveraging the NDRF to expedite federal compliance with EHP requirements.

IV. My Role in the UFR Process

Q: What is my role in the UFR Process?

A: Factsheets describing the role of each participant and stakeholder in the UFR Process are available on the UFR Webpage. For example, the webpage includes factsheets for permit or grant applicants, EHP practitioners, emergency managers, tribes, states and local governments.

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Q: How are stakeholders and the public engaged in the UFR Process?

A: The UFR Steering Group engaged stakeholders throughout the development of the UFR Process through webinars, meetings and the establishment of a webpage. The Steering Group continues to engage with stakeholders not only through webinars and meetings but also through the solicitation of public input on the Tools and Mechanisms such as the Draft EHP Guidance for Federal Disaster Recovery Assistance Applicants, which is found at: <http://www.fema.gov/environmental-historic-preservation/resources-applicants>.

Q: Where can I find information and resources needed to implement the UFR Process?

A: The UFR Webpage has information, updates and resources for the UFR Process. The UFR Webpage can be found at: <http://www.fema.gov/environmental-historic-preservation/unified-federal-environmental-and-historic-preservation-review>.