ARE YOU READY?

AN ELECTED OFFICIAL'S GUIDE TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

NEMA

Emergency Management:
A Vital Government Function

Emergency management is an essential government service. Its purpose is to apply resources and efforts to mitigate, prevent when possible, protect where feasible, and to respond and recover from all threats and hazards that impact the safety and security of the nation.

Emergencies and disasters can pose both short and long-term public policy challenges, including continuity of government, public health, economic development, the environment, agriculture, and technology. In addition to natural disasters, emergency management must deal with complex issues like climate adaptation, cybersecurity, countering terrorism, critical infrastructure interdependencies, infectious disease outbreaks, and school safety. While not necessarily the lead agency in every event, emergency management is responsible for coordinating the overall state response. Having an effective emergency management system in place can help minimize the potentially devastating impact from emergencies and disasters.

Government has the responsibility to ensure an effective response and recovery for any event that threatens the residents and communities of a state. The emergency management agency is responsible for:

- Identifying and assessing potential hazards;
- Developing emergency operations plans and procedures;
- Training personnel;
- Conducting drills and exercises to test plans;
- Providing situational awareness for informed decision making by leaders;
- Coordinating response efforts between all public and private entities;
- Providing critical information to the public;
- Facilitating mutual aid;
- Administering disaster assistance programs; and
- Providing overall coordination for disaster recovery.

▶ Phases of Emergency Management

1 **Preparedness:** Activities undertaken to **prepare for disasters and emergencies** and facilitate future response and recovery efforts. Includes writing emergency operations plans and procedures, training, exercises, evacuation planning, public education and warning.

2 **Mitigation:** Activities undertaken to **avoid, eliminate or reduce the probability of occurrence**, or to lessen the effects of an emergency/disaster. It involves actions to protect lives and property and to defend against attacks.

3 **Response:** Activities undertaken in the **immediate aftermath of a disaster** that help to reduce casualties and damage, and that expedite recovery. Response activities include warning, evacuation, rescue and other similar operations.

4 **Recovery:** **Reconstruction, repair and rebuilding activities** intended to restore a community. In addition to permanent repairs to bridges, roads and buildings, these activities include helping victims return to permanent housing, community redevelopment activities, and long-term redevelopment planning.

Leadership During Crisis:
The Role of Elected Officials

Emergency management, from mitigation through long-term recovery, must be recognized and supported by all elected officials as a critical government service.

In turn, elected officials should hold emergency management agencies accountable and expect them to demonstrate capability that's been developed through the investment of public funds.

Elected officials must understand their emergency authorities and responsibilities, and practice them in conjunction with emergency management officials before a disaster occurs. They should know their state emergency management director and establish a strong relationship, request a briefing on state and local preparedness efforts, learn about emergency plans and procedures, and visit the emergency operations center and other critical facilities.

It is vital for government to be able to promptly and accurately inform the public about the seriousness of an event and provide assurance that leaders are fully informed and directing the response with every available resource. For public officials to be effective leaders during times of crisis, they must have a clear understanding of how government responds to emergencies and disasters, what resources are available, what types of assistance can be provided to citizens, and how much time it may take to deliver that assistance. They must be able to instill a sense of calm and temper expectations of what government can do to aid in the recovery. Public officials must deliver a coordinated message with emergency management so that citizens don't receive conflicting information.

> **They must be able to instill a sense of calm and temper expectations of what government can do to aid in the recovery.**

Policymakers have a responsibility to reach decisions that keep their constituents and communities safe even when those decisions may be unpopular. Mitigation should be encouraged before the disaster occurs to strengthen and protect critical infrastructure, provide incentives for communities for the adoption and enforcement of effective building codes, and reward builders and homeowners who make responsible decisions to mitigate risk that can have positive impacts on the entire community.

Building a National Emergency Management System

Emergency preparedness is a shared responsibility among all levels of government. Adequate emergency management and response personnel, equipment, facilities, training and other resources are necessary at the local, state and federal level.

Strengthening the capabilities of local and state emergency management and the various response disciplines will help prevent the loss of life and property during disasters, deliver assistance to victims more quickly, and reduce costs.

The nation requires an emergency management **system** that recognizes the necessary integration of local, tribal, state, regional and federal organizations capable of creating a single management structure in response to disasters. Unity of effort is a prerequisite for effective disaster response. Intergovernmental relationships must be established and communications networks in place prior to events.

▶ Components of an effective emergency management system:

▸ Emergency management is recognized as a critical government service.

▸ Hazards and threats are identified and emergency operations plans are in place to address them; mitigation and prevention activities are encouraged and supported by public officials.

▸ Emergency management agencies are appropriately staffed, trained and resourced.

▸ Emergency operations centers are functional and used to coordinate disaster response; interoperable communications systems are in place; and information-sharing takes place between all response entities.

▸ Emergency warning and notification systems exist. Government has the ability to provide clear and timely information to the public during times of disaster.

▸ Mutual aid systems help facilitate the request or provision of supplemental disaster assistance when needed.

▸ The private sector, volunteer agencies and other key stakeholders are engaged with government in planning and preparedness activities and are effectively utilized during disaster response and recovery.

▸ Citizens understand their responsibility and take action to prepare for disasters and lessen their reliance on government.

▸ Communication and coordination takes place regularly between emergency management agencies at all levels of government.

EMAC Emergency Management Assistance Compact

EMAC is law in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This congressionally ratified agreement is an efficient and effective system for states to share resources with one another during Governor declared incidents. Resolved upfront are key issues such as tort liability and immunity, license reciprocity, workers' compensation, and reimbursement. Implemented through the state emergency management agencies, states are able to leverage the nation's premiere mutual aid system when they need assistance from each other. NEMA serves as the national administrator for EMAC. **www.emacweb.org**

Emergency Preparedness for Individuals

Elected officials should make sure the public, private sector and media understand the limitations of government in disasters and plan for emergencies in advance.

The increasing reliance on government to meet the most basic needs of people in the immediate aftermath of a disaster leads to unrealistic expectations and causes other vital response and recovery actions to be delayed.

Disaster assistance programs are available to help individuals, businesses, nonprofit organizations and governments recover following a disaster, but the programs are limited and many include loans that must be repaid or require a shared financial contribution. Sufficient government funding isn't available to fully restore what can be lost in a disaster. Therefore, it's important that people make good decisions about where they build their homes and locate their businesses, purchase adequate insurance, put emergency plans in place, and take actions to lessen the impact of disasters before they strike.

The message of individual preparedness and self-reliance is one that should be conveyed by elected officials before, during and after disasters.

State and local emergency management agencies regularly promote individual and family preparedness through public information campaigns and other special events to raise awareness of the importance of emergency planning. Specific instructions on what to do during a disaster can be found on their web sites along with emergency plans, evacuation routes, and emergency shelter locations. Many states now provide information to the public in real-time through apps that can be downloaded onto smart phones or other electronic devices. Elected officials are encouraged to contact their emergency management agencies and lend support to public information campaigns taking place within their jurisdictions.

Private Sector Preparedness

Companies in the private sector have a responsibility to their employees and the communities they serve to be prepared for emergencies and disasters.

Elected officials can encourage key industries and companies to assess their own hazards and threats, develop plans and procedures to address them, and train and drill their employees on emergency protocols. In addition, many businesses that can reopen quickly following a disaster can also help provide basic services to communities such as bottled water, ice, food, and fuel. This allows government to focus on other vital services, such search and rescue operations, utilities restoration and infrastructure repair.

The private sector has vast resources beyond those of government and the systems in place to access and deliver equipment and other assistance more quickly. Most state and local governments have engaged in joint planning with the private sector and recognize them as important partners in an effective emergency management system. Public-private partnerships that allow each sector to utilize their skills and resources can help ensure a quicker recovery.

The private sector must be resilient and elected officials should encourage business leaders to be prepared. Business continuity is vital to a community's ability to recover after a disaster.

NEMA NATIONAL EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

NEMA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization and an affiliate of The Council of State Governments.
Established in 1974, NEMA represents the emergency management directors in the 50 states,
U.S. territories and District of Columbia.

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