

GLOBAL BLUEPRINTS FOR CHANGE

First Edition was prepared in conjunction with the International Workshop on Disaster Reduction convened on August 18-22, 2001

This Blueprint for Change will provide guidance for improving the professional practice of emergency management throughout the world. Improvement is urgently needed because disasters over time are becoming more frequent, more devastating, and more complex than in the past.

Theme A: LIVING WITH NATURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL HAZARDS

Topic A.6: Improving Emergency Management

“A Model for Emergency Response—The Federal Response Plan in the United States”

Disclaimer: This manuscript was prepared as a contribution to the first edition of the Global Blueprints for Change and for use in conjunction with the International Workshop on Disaster Reduction convened on 19-22 August 2001 in Reston, VA. The manuscript is a "work in progress" and has not been edited for policy and for conformity with the other Blueprints.

THE FEDERAL RESPONSE PLAN IN THE UNITED STATES

Abstract: This Blueprint describes twelve Emergency Support Functions (ESF's) comprising the Federal Response Plan OF THE united States. A thirteenth ESF—cross cutting all others and dealing with public information—is included. This comprehensive plan was created under the auspices of the Robert T. Stafford Act, which is the enabling legislation for emergency response in the United States. The Stafford Act provides the legal mandate, the resources, and the mechanisms for an integrated emergency response after the declaration of any disaster by the President.

Introduction

Twelve Emergency Support Functions (ESF's) were developed under the auspices of the Robert T. Stafford Act to facilitate the implementation and coordination of a broad spectrum of integrated emergency response activities after natural and technological disasters. A thirteenth--for Public Information-- is added in this Blueprint. All have been tested and improved over the past decade in numerous disaster situations.

Strategic Plan: Twenty-five Federal Government agencies and one non-governmental organization (The American Red Cross) will cooperate in the implementation of each ESF, One organization is designated as the lead for each ESF while the others have supporting functions.

ESF 1: Transportation

Urgent Need: Access to the disaster area

Planning Assumptions for Overcoming Barriers to Implementation:

- 1) The area's/region's transportation infrastructure will sustain damage, which will influence the means and accessibility of relief services and supplies to protect people and property.
- 2) Disaster responses requiring transportation capacity will be difficult to coordinate effectively during the immediate post-disaster period.
- 3) Access routes will be disrupted for a significant period, because clearing of debris and completion of repairs will be gradual in spite of best efforts.

ESF 2: Communication

Urgent Need: Reliable and timely information

Planning Assumptions for Overcoming Barriers to Implementation:

- 1) The initial focus will be on coordinating life saving activities and reestablishing control in the disaster area.
- 2) Initial reports will be fragmented, inaccurate, and incomplete.
- 3) The disaster area's capability to communicate with the rest of the nation will be impaired.
- 4) Weather and other environmental factors will restrict the speed of restoring communications.

ESF 3: Public Works and Engineering

Urgent Need: Resources to restore urban functions in the disaster area

Planning Assumptions for Overcoming Barriers to Implementation:

- 1) Outside assistance and resources will be needed to clear debris, perform damage assessment, evaluate structural safety of buildings and utilities, make repairs to essential facilities, reduce risk by demolishing structures, and providing emergency water for human/health needs and firefighting.
- 2) Rapid damage assessment will be required to facilitate decision making.
- 3) Significant numbers of personnel having engineering and construction skills along with equipment will need to be brought in from outside the disaster area.
- 4) The rate of implementation of ESF 3 in the disaster area depends upon the rate of implementation of ESF 1--Transportation.

ESF 4: Firefighting

Urgent Need: Managing a large firefighting operation in the disaster area

Planning Assumptions for Overcoming Barriers to Implementation:

- 1) Many large, damaging urban, rural, and wildland fires both within and outside the disaster area will happen simultaneously with the disaster. Some will be related; others will occur coincidentally.
- 2) Firefighting resources, including firefighters, water, and equipment, will be scarce.
- 3) Access for wheeled vehicles as well as people will be hampered by the debris, landslides, and other activities.
- 4) Communications will be disrupted and radio communications will be a priority.

ESF 5: Information and Planning

Urgent Need: Coordination of information on the severity of the impacts and the planning and coordination of all ESF's

Planning Assumptions for Overcoming Barriers to Implementation:

- 1) There will be an immediate and continuing demand for information from government officials and all sectors of the populace on the severity of the impacts, especially in the disaster area.
- 2) The local government will be the best source of information on damage and initial needs.
- 4) There will be delays in reestablishing transportation and communications capability and the ability to travel to and from the disaster area and to communicate inside and outside the disaster area will be impossible initially and sporadic for some time.
- 5) Rapid damage assessments will be slowed by lack of communications and transportation problems as well as by smoke, weather, lack of resources, and various personnel problems.

ESF 6: Mass Care

Urgent Need: Meeting the urgent needs of disaster victims

Planning Assumptions for Overcoming Barriers to Implementation:

- 1) The disaster will occur without any warning at a time of day and season of the year that will produce maximum demands on the capacity of local, regional, and national emergency response capabilities.
- 2) There will be large numbers of trapped, dead, and injured, requiring search and rescue capabilities, medical personnel, and health care professionals.
- 3) Hundreds of thousands of disaster victims will be forced from their homes, schools, and businesses, depending upon the stricken area, time of occurrence, nature and severity of the

damage, and the weather conditions, and will need temporary housing, food, water, and clothing for at least 30 days.

- 4) Thousands of transients such as tourists, students, and foreign visitors may be stranded for a significant period of time.

ESF 7: Resource Support

Urgent Need: Timely provision of resources from non-impacted regions of the nation and others

Planning Assumptions for Overcoming Barriers to Implementation:

- 1) Resources needed for lifesaving and life support are top priority, and will be made available as rapidly as possible.
- 2) Resources will be nonexistent in the disaster area for some time, Depending upon the nature and distribution of the damage; therefore, immediate requirements will be met from national resources from outside the disaster area, possibly including donations from foreign countries.
- 3) Transport of external resources to the disaster area will require a staging area that is accessible as well as safe from aftershocks and environmental factors.

ESF 8: Health and Medical Services

Urgent Need: Timely provision of health and medical services in the disaster area

Planning Assumptions for Overcoming Barriers to Implementation:

- 1) Resources in the disaster area will be inadequate to clear the dead and injured from the scene or to treat them in local hospitals, or temporary shelters.
- 2) External resources will be needed, because not only will physicians be in short supply but also hospitals, nursing homes, pharmacies, and other medical/health care facilities may be badly damaged or destroyed, and those that survive may be unusable or only partially usable due to loss of personnel, or lack of utilities (electricity, water, sewage) and medical supplies.
- 3) Secondary hazards such as fires, aftershocks, and chemical spills and the massing of people in temporary shelters may increase the potential for disease and injury. while increasing the need for mental health counseling.

ESF 9: Urban Search and Rescue

Urgent Need: Provision of resources for search and rescue activities in the disaster area as soon as possible within the first 72 hours

Planning Assumptions for Overcoming Barriers to Implementation:

- 1) The mortality rate will dramatically increase in 24 hours and there will be no hope beyond 72 hours.
- 2) Large numbers of local residents and workers in the disaster area will immediately initiate search and rescue operations voluntarily, but they will need coordination, direction, and resources.
- 3) Access to damaged areas will be restricted, and some sites will be accessible only by air or sea.
- 4) Secondary events such as aftershocks, fire, and release of hazardous materials will threaten survivors.

ESF 10: Hazardous Materials

Urgent Need: Immediate response to the release of hazardous materials in the disaster area

Planning Assumptions for Overcoming Barriers to Implementation:

- 1) There will be numerous hazardous materials incidents, occurring simultaneously with the earthquake in the disaster area, and in separate locations, both inland and along coastal waters.
2. Response personnel, clean up crews, and clean up equipment will have difficulty reaching the site of a hazardous material release because of damage sustained by the transportation infrastructure.
- 3) Standard communications will be disrupted for a significant period.
- 4) Even if there are no hazardous materials incidents, there will be considerable concern about certain critical facilities (e.g., power plants, chemical plants, oil and gas pipelines, refineries, and waste water treatment facilities) located in or near the disaster area, creating the need for site evaluations.

ESF 11: Food

Urgent Need: Immediate access to useable supplies of food and water

Planning Assumptions for Overcoming Barriers to Implementation:

- 1) Within the disaster area, one-half or the food processing and distribution capabilities will be destroyed.
- 2) One-half or the usable food grains (e.g., honey, wheat, corn, oats, rice), which can be consumed in dire circumstances, will be accessible in their unprocessed form.
- 3) Three-fourths of the water supply will be unusable, requiring juices or potable water supplies to be made available.
- 4) There will be a near-total disruption of energy sources.

ESF 12: Energy

Urgent Need: Rapid restoration of energy systems

Planning Assumptions for Overcoming Barriers to Implementation:

- 1) There will be widespread and prolonged failure of electric power and natural gas systems, especially in the disaster area, which will have both a local and a regional impact on hospitals, businesses, homes, government buildings, hotels, universities, water treatment plants, and traffic.
- 2) Restoration of services will require prioritization and may take weeks and months to accomplish fully.

A CROSSCUTTING THIRTEENTH ESF: Public Information

Urgent Need: Rapid and effective communication with all sectors of the public

Planning Assumptions for Overcoming Barriers to Implementation

- 1) There will be a great demand for information from all sectors of the populace about the impacts of the disaster, the ongoing emergency response activities, and what it means for them.
- 2) After an earthquake disaster, policy makers will have to balance the demands for useful information from the populace with the fact that there will only be limited and incomplete information within the first 72 hours to communicate to the populace through the electronic and print media.

Recommendations

- 1) Every nation needs an objective evaluation of its existing "Response Plan" and its actual capability for effective emergency response.
- 2) Steps to increase the technical and political capacity for emergency response should be ongoing, because no community or nation can have too much technical capability or political capital.
- 3) Training should be ongoing and incorporate new technologies, as needed.
- 4) Exercises should be planned and implemented at intervals that are commensurate with the frequency and likelihood of disasters.
- 5) Every disaster should be used as a reality check and an opportunity to marshal political support to update and revise the Response Plan.

REFERENCE

Federal Response Plan, available from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, 500 C Street SW, Washington, D. C.

