



Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic: Response and Recovery Through Federal-State-Local-Tribal Partnership

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Office of Intergovernmental Affairs**

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Topline

- Response and recovery efforts are locally executed, state managed, and federally supported. It is important that requests for assistance, including for critical supplies, get routed through the proper channels as soon as possible.
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) now leads Federal operations on behalf of the White House Coronavirus Task Force, which oversees the whole-of-government response to the pandemic. As part of the White House Coronavirus Task Force, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will continue to provide their subject matter expertise as the Nation's pre-eminent public health responders.
- On March 13, 2020, President Trump took decisive, unprecedented action by declaring a nationwide emergency pursuant to Sec. 501(b) of the Stafford Act, making FEMA funding and coordination assistance available to every State, territory, and tribe across the Nation for the emergency protective measures they are undertaking to protect the American public. The nationwide emergency declaration increases Federal support to the White House Task Force as it leads the ongoing Federal response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.
- On the same day, President Trump exercised statutory authorities pursuant to the National Emergencies Act to declare a national emergency in response to COVID-19, giving healthcare providers on the front lines of this pandemic the flexibility they need to respond.
- President Trump has [encouraged](#) governors and tribal leaders to request Federal assistance under the Stafford Act (i.e. major disaster declaration for COVID-19 efforts). A list of approved disaster declarations can be found [here](#). President Trump has also directed the Secretary of Defense to allow use of the National Guard under Title 32 to support State and local emergency assistance efforts in requesting States. This will allow governors to call up the National Guard to support their disaster response efforts on a fully reimbursable basis and under their respective command and control, if that becomes necessary.

I. Overview

COVID-19 is a rapidly evolving threat to the United States and the world. Americans at all levels, from the President to the private citizen play an important role in defeating COVID-19. Successful emergency management requires nationwide cooperation and unity of effort, combining the strength and ingenuity of our citizens and private sector with a sweeping and all-inclusive whole-of-government response. Our efforts must clearly communicate the needs of citizens through a singular and organized system to ensure efficient, streamlined information flow that prevents overload at any level.

The following provides a brief overview of America’s emergency management system, as well as guidance on reporting State, local, and tribal needs and requests for information regarding COVID-19. America is well prepared to counter the threats that face us as a Nation. Together, we will defeat COVID-19, and your role in this fight is vital. Please help us to keep essential information channels as clear as possible by following the framework and communication measures outlined here.

II. A Tiered Response

National response processes provide tiered levels of support only if additional resources or capabilities are needed. **Most issues and incidents begin and end locally and are executed at the local or tribal level.** Local, State, tribal, territorial, and insular area governments better understand the needs of their citizens and have direct relationships. These incidents often require unified response from local agencies, the private sector, tribes, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Larger incidents require additional support from neighboring jurisdictions or State governments, but most issues within larger incidents are still handled at lower levels of government, in partnership with the private sector. Only a small number of issues and incidents require Federal support, intended to assist States and territories only when their resources and capabilities are overwhelmed. **When all levels of government become engaged, a response is locally executed, state managed, and federally supported.** Operational coordination occurs across all of these levels and consists of actions and activities that enable decision makers to determine appropriate courses of action and provide oversight for all types of incidents, including complex homeland security operations, to achieve unity of effort and effective outcomes.

III. The National Incident Management System and National Response Framework

The National Response Framework (NRF) is a framework for all types of threats and hazards, ranging from pandemics, accidents, technological hazards, and natural disasters to human-caused incidents. This Framework implements the National Incident Management System (NIMS), which defines this Nation’s approach to emergency management. The Nation experiences a diverse set of threats and hazards. As a result, jurisdictions and organizations work together every day to share resources, integrate tactics, and act collaboratively. Whether these organizations are nearby or are supporting each other from across the country, their success depends on a common, interoperable approach to sharing resources, coordinating and managing incidents, and communicating information. NIMS embodies this comprehensive approach. You can find more on NIMS [here](#).

NRF describes specific authorities and best practices for managing incidents that range from the serious but purely local to those that are catastrophic and national in scope. The NRF is built on scalable, flexible, and adaptable concepts identified in the NIMS to

align key roles and responsibilities across the Nation. The structures, roles, and responsibilities described in this Framework can be partially or fully implemented in the context of a threat or hazard, in anticipation of a significant event, or in response to an incident. In October of 2019, FEMA published the fourth edition of the NRF, which can found on FEMA’s website [here](#).

IV. Unity of Effort through Unified Command

The use of unified command enables jurisdictions and those with authority or responsibility for the incident to jointly manage and direct incident activities and requests through a common channel. The COVID-19 response utilizes the NRF to organize specific levels of response. Implementing the NRF ensures accurate flow of needs from bottom to top and flow of information from top to bottom. **State or tribal Executive requests must be channeled to FEMA, via the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC), before contacting other Federal agencies.** Table 1 below provides guidance on levels of response command.

COVID-19 RESPONSE LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK				
	TASK FORCE	VPOTUS	PRESIDENT’S CORONAVIRUS TASKFORCE	Consult with POTUS
	FEDERAL	HHS Secretary FEMA Administrator	HHS Secretary’s Operations Center (SOC) FEMA National Response Coordination Center (NRCC)	Contact COVID-19 Task Force POCs
	REGION	FEMA or HHS Regional Administrator	FEMA/HHS Regional Response Coordination Centers (RRNC) Regional Tribal Liaison	Contact HHS SOC or FEMA NRCC
	STATE TERRITORY TRIBE	Governor Tribal Chief Executive	STATE Emergency Operations Center	Contact FEMA/HHS Regional Response Coordination Center
	COUNTY PARISH MUNICIPALITY	Commissioner Council President	COUNTY Emergency Operations Center	Contact State Emergency Management Office/EOC
	LOCAL	Local Mayor Local Judge Tribal Leader	LOCAL Emergency Operations Center	Contact County Emergency Management Office/EOC
INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS				

Table 1: Information Flow during COVID-19 Response

V. FEMA Public Assistance

The Administration continues to place its full weight and resources behind its unprecedented response to the COVID-19 pandemic. On March 13, 2020, the President declared a nationwide emergency pursuant to the Stafford Act. The President’s action streamlines FEMA’s administering of Public Assistance to those affected States and

tribal nations under a national declaration. Pursuant to this declaration, FEMA, in coordination with HHS, is assisting State, local, tribal, territorial governments, and other eligible entities, with the health and safety actions they take on behalf of the American public.

The emergency declaration will reimburse eligible emergency protective measures taken at the direction or guidance of public health officials under Category B of FEMA Public Assistance Program. FEMA will not duplicate assistance provided by HHS, to include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), or other Federal agencies. More [here](#).

VI. Useful Contact Information

CITIZENS: Citizens with individual health and medical needs concerning COVID-19 should contact their local healthcare provider or primary care physician.

COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS: It is important that requests for assistance, especially for critical supplies, get routed through the proper channels. County and municipal officials should work through their local emergency operations office up through the State Emergency Management Agency/Emergency Operations Center for requests for assistance. A list of State Emergency Management Agencies can be found [here](#). Any needs that cannot be met by the State should then be sent to the respective FEMA regional office. FEMA regions will direct requests to FEMA NRCC in Washington, D.C. for fulfillment.

STATE OFFICIALS: For COVID-19 specific information, all State officials need to be integrated into State emergency management operations to make requests. Public health officials need to be fully integrated into local and State emergency operations. State officials should contact their respective FEMA Regional Office found [here](#).

TRIBAL OFFICIALS: Tribal Chief Executives should contact their State emergency management agency or their FEMA Regional Tribal Liaison. A list of important points of contact can be found [here](#). More information on options for assistance can be found [here](#).

PRIVATE SECTOR LEADERS: All requests for assistance or to provide assistance to the COVID-19 response from non-governmental entities, including the private sector, should first be worked locally and at the State level.

Issues of national scope should be routed through FEMA's National Business Emergency Operations Center (NBEOC), created to enhance communication and collaboration with private industry partners and ensure their integration into disaster operations at a strategic and tactical level. Business leaders may find information about FEMA NBEOC [here](#). For more information, including points of contact, please visit FEMA's [How To Help](#) page.