

Overview of Stafford Act Support to States

This overview illustrates actions Federal agencies are likely to take to assist State, tribal, and local governments that are affected by a major disaster or emergency. Key operational components that may be activated include the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC), Regional Response Coordination Center (RRCC), Joint Field Office (JFO), and Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs).

1. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) National Operations Center continually monitors potential major disasters and emergencies. When advance warning is received, DHS may deploy—and may request that other Federal agencies deploy—liaison officers and personnel to a State emergency operations center to assess the emerging situation. An RRCC may be fully or partially activated. Facilities, such as mobilization centers, may be established to accommodate Federal personnel, equipment, and supplies.
2. Immediately after a major incident, tribal and/or local emergency personnel respond and assess the situation. If necessary, those officials seek additional resources through mutual aid and assistance agreements and the State. State officials also review the situation, mobilize State resources, use interstate mutual aid and assistance processes such as the Emergency Management Assistance Compact to augment State resources, and provide situation assessments to the DHS/Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regional office. The Governor activates the State emergency operations plan, declares a state of emergency, and may request a State/DHS joint Preliminary Damage Assessment (PDA). The State and Federal officials conduct the PDA in coordination with tribal/local officials as required and determine whether the impact of the event warrants a request for a Presidential declaration of a major disaster or emergency. Based on the results of the PDA, the Governor may request a Presidential declaration specifying the kind of Federal assistance needed.
3. After a major disaster or emergency declaration, an RRCC coordinates initial regional and field activities until a JFO is established. Regional teams assess the impact of the event, gauge immediate State needs, and make preliminary arrangements to set up field facilities. (If regional resources are or may be overwhelmed or if it appears that the event may result in particularly significant consequences, DHS may deploy a national-level Incident Management Assistance Team (IMAT).)
4. Depending on the scope and impact of the event, the NRCC carries out initial activations and mission assignments and supports the RRCC.
5. The Governor appoints a State Coordinating Officer (SCO) to oversee State response and recovery efforts. A Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO), appointed by the President in a Stafford Act declaration, coordinates Federal activities in support of the State.
6. A JFO may be established locally to provide a central point for Federal, State, tribal, and local executives to coordinate their support to the incident. The Unified Coordination Group leads the JFO. The Unified Coordination Group typically consists of the FCO, SCO, and senior officials from other entities with primary statutory or jurisdictional responsibility and significant operational responsibility for an aspect of an incident. This group may meet initially via conference calls to develop a common set of objectives and a coordinated initial JFO action plan.
7. The Unified Coordination Group coordinates field operations from a JFO. In coordination with State, tribal, and/or local agencies, Emergency Support Functions assess the situation and identify requirements. Federal agencies provide resources under DHS/FEMA mission assignments or their own authorities.

8. As immediate response priorities are met, recovery activities begin. Federal and State agencies assisting with recovery and mitigation activities convene to discuss needs.
9. The Stafford Act Public Assistance program provides disaster assistance to States, tribes, local governments, and certain private nonprofit organizations. FEMA, in conjunction with the State, conducts briefings to inform potential applicants of the assistance that is available and how to apply.
10. Throughout response and recovery operations, DHS/FEMA Hazard Mitigation program staff at the JFO look for opportunities to maximize mitigation efforts in accordance with State hazard mitigation plans.
11. As the need for full-time interagency coordination at the JFO decreases, the Unified Coordination Group plans for selective release of Federal resources, demobilization, and closeout. Federal agencies work directly with disaster assistance grantees (i.e., State or tribal governments) from their regional or headquarters offices to administer and monitor individual recovery programs, support, and technical services.

The following chart summarizes Stafford Act support to States.

